

MAKING NATIONS, IN THE *MAHJAR*:  
SYRIAN AND LEBANESE LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISMS IN NEW YORK CITY,  
SÃO PAULO, AND BUENOS AIRES, 1913-1929

By

Stacy D Fahrenthold

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of

History

Northeastern University

Boston, MA

June 2014

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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This dissertation traces the emergence of transnational political institutions among Arabophone Ottoman emigrants living in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires, and analyzes the development of a long-distance nationalist politics among emigrant activists during and after World War I. Using socially-produced primary materials written and circulated by Syrian and Lebanese emigrants themselves, this research argues that emigrants living abroad played fundamental roles in the nascence of competing Arab, Syrian, and Lebanese nationalist movements. From the Americas, these activists were the first to envision a post-Ottoman political future for the homeland which placed Syria (or Lebanon, established in 1920) within the international community of nation states. The pursuit of nation-building led many of these activists to pursue partnership with the Entente Powers, particularly France and the United States of America. The partnerships formed between Syrian emigrants and the Great Powers influenced the politics of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and helped to usher in the French Mandate declared over Syria and Lebanon in 1920. But as the French instituted an increasingly imperialistic state over the Levant, sizable emigrant communities in the Americas presented a constant source of dissent, agitation against French rule, and support for an increasingly radical nationalist movement. By tracing nationalist politics and activism across transnational space, this study labors towards a needed reframing of modern Syrian and Lebanese history within the social networks and human geographies of individuals, rather than the territorial confines of the nation-state.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation research would not have been possible but for the unrelenting patience and support of many people working across several institutions. First and foremost, I wish to thank Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, whose investment in this project gave me an enduring reserve of strength to see it through to completion. Thank you to my committee members, Laura Frader and Akram Khater, whose comments and suggestions on earlier drafts helped me to improve the current manuscript, work that has been started but much of which remains. All three of them have much to do with this dissertation's success; the manuscript's imperfections are, of course, mine alone. Next, I would like to thank members of the faculty at Northeastern University who made all the difference in my time there: Katherine Luongo, Anthony Penna, Clay McShane, and especially the late Christina Gilmartin, who took an early interest in me and who helped me to navigate the early challenges of coursework, comps, and graduate school in general.

My graduate student colleagues at Northeastern University have been an enormous source of support as I wrote, rewrote, celebrated, and mourned this dissertation. Special thanks go to my writing partners, Ross A. Newton (esq) and Victoria Hallinan, with whom many hours were spent sipping coffee and writing in campus cafes. I would also like to thank those who read portions of this thesis and helped me improve it: Burleigh Hendrickson, Ethan Hawkley, Elizabeth Lehr, Feruza Aripova, and Regina Katzyulina.

I would like to thank the many people who through helped me undertake this research in both Lebanon and the United States: first among them, Guita Hourani, Liliane Haddad, and Elie Nabhan at the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University in Zouk Mosbeh. Through no small effort on their part, my 2011 stay with LERC was the most significant turning point for this project. I would also like to thank Sami Salameh, who assisted

me with collections in the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke, Ibrahim ‘Assi and Michel ‘Obeid at the *Centre des archives nationales* in Beirut, as well as the staff at the American University of Beirut’s Nami Jafet Library. In the U.S., I would like to thank the archival staff at University of Minnesota’s Immigration History Research Center, particularly Daniel Necas, Elizabeth Haven Hawley, and the Center’s former director, Donna Gabaccia. At the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, special thanks go to Matthew Stiffler and Kirsten Terry. In Boston, Massachusetts, I would like to thank the archivists at the Schlesinger Library for Women’s History as well as the staff at the Widener Library Philips Reading Room. Finally, I would like to thank several individuals with whom I sounded out various iterations of this project, and whose input on innumerable conference papers and presentations helped me organize the thoughts contained here: Isa Blumi, Andrew Arsan, Simon Jackson, Reem Bailony, Stephen Hyland, John Karam, William Gervase Clarence-Smith, Philip S. Khoury, and many, many others. *Mahjar* studies is more than a collaborative research field; it is a community. Thank you all.

I would like to thank my partner, David Schultz, who celebrated with me daily even the smallest milestones and who also provided me with comfort or a good meal when I needed it. Thanks to Ed Burton for being a sounding board; many homebrews spent and (hopefully) many more to come. And finally, I owe everything to my grandparents, Martha and David Burton, who made college, graduate school, and a whole lot more possible for me and who were always at the ready with a kind word and a cup of coffee. If I can strive to be even half the academic (and person) they think me to be, I am sure I will be just fine.

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## NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

This dissertation is in conformity with the Translation/Transliteration Standards laid out by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES).<sup>1</sup> Diacritics have been added to technical terms in Arabic (and translations provided in parentheses where appropriate) but are omitted from proper names, places, and words included on *IJMES*'s common word list (although both 'ayn and hamza are preserved in this case).<sup>2</sup>

All translations from Arabic, French, Spanish, and Portuguese are my own, and I take full responsibility for errors or ambiguities.

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<sup>1</sup> The journal's transliteration table for rendering Arabic and Persian words into the Latin script is available at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/docs/TransChart.pdf>. (accessed 26 March 2014).

<sup>2</sup> This list is available at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/docs/WordList.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2014).



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### *Archives*

LERC	Lebanese Emigration Research Center
AUB	American University of Beirut
IHRC	Immigration History Research Center
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
AANM	Arab American National Museum

### *Frequently Used Arabic Terms*

<i>mahjar</i>	literally “place of emigration;” refers to the Syrian and Lebanese diaspora, particularly the communities in the Americas.
<i>Mashriq</i>	refers to the eastern Mediterranean lands now comprising Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and parts of Jordan (historical <i>bilad al-sham</i> )
<i>muhājirīn</i>	emigrants
<i>jāliyya/jālliyāt</i>	“colony,” “community.” Term used by Syrian and Lebanese emigrants to refer to a specific settlement in the diaspora. Used by emigrants as a cognate to <i>colonia</i> in Spanish, <i>colonia</i> in Portuguese, and <i>colony</i> in English.
<i>nahḍa</i>	literally “renewal” or “renaissance;” refers simultaneously to the flowering of liberal political ideas in the late nineteenth century eastern Mediterranean and the continuing influence of constitutionalist, progressive, and reformist ideas from the late Ottoman period into the early twentieth century.
<i>simsār</i>	broker, agent. Refers to individuals who assisted emigrants in migration and settlement in the diaspora.

## INTRODUCTION: MAKING NATIONS, IN THE *MAHJAR*: SYRIAN AND LEBANESE LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISMS BETWEEN NEW YORK, SÃO PAULO, AND BUENOS AIRES

Between 1880 and 1914, one third of a million Ottoman subjects left greater Syria and boarded steamships headed for the New World. Originating from Mount Lebanon, small towns in western Syria, and the suburbs of cities like Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus, these Ottoman Syrians represented between 18 and 25 percent of the Mashriq's entire population.<sup>3</sup> Many of the emigrants [*al-muhajirin* in Arabic] began by moving to the city, swelling the populations of Damascus and especially Beirut in the late nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> By the 1880s, masses of people stopped not at the coast but headed for Beirut's expanding seaport, congregating on steam ships bound for the Atlantic and into the *mahjar* [literally lands of emigration, sometimes translated as diaspora]. Then, after a trying month-long journey across choppy Atlantic waters, often in a third-class compartment, these Ottoman subjects arrived in New York City, Buenos Aires, or São Paulo, hoping to join other their compatriots in ethnic communities already developing in all three cities. But first, the *muhajirin* would face the immigration officials charged with determining their national origins, and as it turned out, these officials were often at a loss for how to categorize Ottoman immigrants. In New York City, they were usually (but not exclusively)

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<sup>3</sup> The Mashriq refers to historical *bilad al-sham*, or the greater Syrian territory comprising modern Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and parts of Jordan. The emigration figures are Charles Issawi's, and refer to the rates of emigration from greater Syria (18%) and from Mount Lebanon (25%) respectively. Although tracking statistical rates of emigration between 1880-1914 is a tricky matter (owing not only to the preponderance of clandestine migration as well as significant rates of return migration but also to the politicization of population accounting immediately following World War I), Issawi's figures are generally accepted by historians working on the Syrian and Lebanese diaspora. Charles Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," in Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds., *Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration* (London: I.B. Taurus and Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 58-60; Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: the Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

called “turks,” originating from “Turkey in Asia.”<sup>5</sup> In Brazil and Argentina, they were called “turcos,” a catch-all pejorative term used by nativists to refer to Arab, Armenian, Persian, Egyptian, and Kurdish immigrants.<sup>6</sup> Rarely were Ottoman immigrants from Syria called “Syrians” as such, and the reason for this was simple: they had left their homes as subjects of the Ottoman Empire. They would not “become Syrian” until later, and they did so in America.<sup>7</sup>

Before World War I, Ottoman immigrants from Syria were rarely distinguished from other Ottoman groups when they arrived in the Americas: Armenians, Sephardic Jews, and Turkish speaking Muslims. When Arabophone Ottoman immigrants were classified as “Syrians” in the Americas, furthermore, the term denoted a geographical place of origin, and not a nationality or political identifier. This all changed during World War I. As the Ottoman Empire entered the conflict on the German side, the ugliest facets of war came to Syria: disease, conscription, military rule, and a devastating famine which claimed the lives of another 18 percent of Mount Lebanon’s population.<sup>8</sup> In the Americas, Ottoman Syrian emigrants watched the horrifying turn of events back home and responded with relief drives, diplomatic appeals to the Entente Powers to “Save the Near East,”<sup>9</sup> and political activism with an increasingly nationalist bent aimed at ending Ottoman control over the Mashriq and the creation of independent nation states there instead. Nationalists operating in the *mahjar* disagreed with one another on questions of means as well as on what the new nations in the Mashriq should look

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 77.

<sup>6</sup> John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Newliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 26; Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, “Becoming ‘Syrian’ in America: a Global Geography of Ethnicity and Nation,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 299.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Abraham Rihbany, *America Save the Near East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1918).

like, but they all reached out “behind the seas” (*wara’ al-bihar*) to political partners in Ottoman Syria as well as to foreign powers to achieve their goals. New political and social expectations were placed on the shoulders of Syrian and Lebanese emigrants, framed specifically within the pathos of citizenship and national duty. Activists and intellectuals disseminated and refined these ideas during the World War, coming to distinctive, at times competing, visions of what comprised the Syrian and Lebanese nations, who belonged to them, on what basis, and what role emigrants would play in sponsoring national development in the homeland. This represented a significant break with the past: emigrants who had left the Ottoman Empire and identified as Ottoman subjects before the War began to describe themselves as “Syrian,” “Lebanese,” or “Arab” during the War, bearing important consequences for their relationship to their homeland.

This dissertation queries the emergence of long-distance nationalist politics and culture in the American *mahjar*, with particular attention to the development of Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalists among Ottoman emigrants living in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina during and after World War I. Taken together, the chapters within make four principle arguments. First, I argue that before the War, Syrian Ottoman emigrants constructed a series of transnational social institutions that contributed to the emergence of a *mahjari* public sphere.<sup>10</sup> Through the press, philanthropic organizations, political committees, ethnic clubs, and mutual aid societies, the emigrant communities in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires made not only maintained enduring contacts with Syrians in the homeland but also with other communities in the *mahjar*. Second, I argue that during World War I, transnational linkages between the Syrian communities in the Americas became significant sites for competing nationalist political parties, and that as a result, long-distance variants of Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalisms emerged in the *mahjar*.

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<sup>10</sup> Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 36-48.

One of the most important legacies of emigrant participation in the nationalist movements during the War was a growing reliance of Syrianists and Lebanists on the French Foreign Ministry as the guarantor of the homeland's independence; after the War, France would claim its Mandate over both Syria and Lebanon, with the support of key activists working abroad.

Third, I argue that as French Mandatory states emerged in the Mashriq during the 1920s, they hastened to extend their administrative authority over Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living abroad through a combination of population policies, documentary regimes, and the extension of its consular infrastructure into Syrian and Lebanese communities abroad. In the *mahjar*, both supporters and opponents of the Mandate made claims on the homeland as a transnational citizenry. Finally, I examine the culture of Syrian long-distance nationalism during the 1920s, arguing that the virtues of transnational good citizenship and patriotism assigned very different (if complementary) roles for emigrant men and women. A familial pattern of nationalism emerged that focused on reforming Syrian emigrant men and women for the benefit for producing a Syrian national culture in the *mahjar*. The pursuit of a nationalist cultural "ideal" led young emigrant men into political fraternities, homosocial spaces where a rigorous schedule of philanthropic, intellectual, and physical self-improvement promised to make them Syrian men. But women activists experienced this new trend very differently, particularly woman textile workers who after participating in relief efforts and other campaigns led by the Syrian and Lebanese nationalist parties of the *mahjar* during the War, became the subject of discussion among these same nationalists soon after. A new disjuncture emerged between the patriotic femininity of WWI-era Syrian "national mothers" and the more overtly feminist aims of Syrian "new women" in the 1920s.

*Ottoman, Syrian, Lebanese, or Arab: Issues of Definition*

In the *mahjar*, national self-identifications remained situational and unstable, referring to

a messy mixture of an individual's class background, confessional orientation, political sensibilities as well as identification with a national entity that had yet to formally exist.<sup>11</sup> The emigrants that arrived in the Americas before 1918 did so as subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Before the War, some identified as "Syrian" to distinguish their largely Christian identity from the Muslim associations of the word "Turk."<sup>12</sup> In *Between Arab and White*, Sarah Gualtieri argues that the development of a Syrian ethnic identity in the United States in the early twentieth century was a transnational process depending simultaneously on the intellectual wellspring of the Lebanese *nahda* and the desire to parlay an Arab Christian identity into a racial "whiteness" intelligible to the American legal system. She argues that what constitutes the "ethnic" or the "national" in diasporic spaces is really a question of analytical orientation and referents: if these discourses are in reference to the immigrant community's "place" in relation to the U.S. state historians refer to Syrian "ethnicity," but when the same ideas refer to a homeland they become patriotic, or in Gualtieri's usage, "protonationalist."<sup>13</sup> Akram Khater argues in "Becoming 'Syrian' in America" that the experience of emigration influenced the emergence of "Syrian" political identity; after an arduous trans-Atlantic journey, these migrants identified as "Syrian" for the first time at the ports of the Americas, part of an inclusion strategy in a situation where being a "Turk" posed problems. The marker "Syrian" referred to a fluid political identity made

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<sup>11</sup> The Arab nationalist kingdom under Faysal's Hashimite monarchy formally proclaimed itself in March 1920; it was later extinguished by the French in July 1920. France formally established the state of Greater Lebanon (*Grand Liban*) on 1 September 1920, and administered Syria as five separate statelets: Damascus, Aleppo, and the alawite State (established in 1920), and Jabal Druze and Alexandretta (established in 1921). The statelets were integrated into a "Syrian federation" under French Mandate in 1922. Although the French administered them separately (with varying degrees of success), Syrians participated in local revolts and insurgencies that often crossed the borders between them, borders which Syrian and Arab nationalists charged were entirely artificial.

<sup>12</sup> Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 60-1. This strategy is clearly seen in Rev. Bishara's 1914 book, *The Origin of the Modern Syrian*, a text addressed to the American public with the aim of demonstrating Syria's "Christian Semitic" and "Aryan" roots as a means of promoting the immigrant community's access to U.S. citizenship. Kalil A Bishara, *The Origin of the Modern Syrian* (New York: al-Hoda Printing Press, 1914).

<sup>13</sup> Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 82. For more on the connection between ethnicity and national identity, see Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: a Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 1 (1992), 3-41.

simultaneously in the American and Middle Eastern contexts. As Akram Khater argues, Ottoman emigrants “became Syrian” in the Americas, and what being a Syrian meant remained highly situational before during, and even after World War I.<sup>14</sup> There were also significant non-political motivations for an emigrant’s preference for one term over another. In Brazil in the 1920s, to be Syrian or Lebanese was a marker of an immigrants degree of economic success; a common joke had it that “Turks are poor, Syrians middling, and Lebanese rich” [turco pobre, sírio remediado, libanês rico].<sup>15</sup>

Although individual Ottoman emigrants identified themselves variously depending on a complex amalgam of political, confessional, or economic motivations, to identify as “Syrian,” “Lebanese,” “Arab,” or “Ottoman” during World War I was to identify with one of the *mahjar*’s competing nationalist movements. And these floating signifiers also changed over time, reflecting the changing sympathies and objectives of their respective movements. Although even the Ottoman states referred to residents of Mount Lebanon as “Lebanese” before 1914, after the War’s beginning an emigrant’s self-identification as “Lebanese” abroad increasingly connoted not only support for the creation of a new “greater Lebanese” state distinct from its Syrian hinterland but also support for France as the guarantor of this would-be territory. To further complicate things, an emigrant activist’s professed nationality often did not coincide with the national territories which emerged in the Mashriq after 1920. To illustrate this point: emigrant journalists Na‘um Mukarzil, Sallum Mukarzil, and Amin al-Rihani all came from the same village in Mount Lebanon (Freike); they were colleagues who travelled together and even collaborated politically during the War. Na‘um Mukarzil identified as Lebanese as early as 1914

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<sup>14</sup>Khater, “Becoming 'Syrian' in America,” 304-5.

<sup>15</sup> Mintaha Alcuri Campos, *Turco Pobre, Sírio Remediado, Libanês Rico: Trajetória do Imigrante Libanês no Espírito Santo* (Vitória: Instituto Jones dos Santos Neves, 1987), 21.

and became a significant voice for Francophile Maronite nationalism in New York. His brother Sallum, however, never identified as Lebanese, preferring “Syrian” or “Syrian American.”<sup>16</sup> Complicating matters further, Amin al-Rihani called himself “Syrian Lebanese” a transnational terminology used frequently by emigrants after 1920 as a catchall term for the immigrants in the *mahjar* but which was also used pointedly as a means of critiquing the divisive role nationalists politics had played in these same communities.<sup>17</sup>

National identity is always complicated, situational, and historically contingent, but what made it particularly so in the *mahjar* was the homeland’s experience of World War I, the waning of Ottoman sovereignty, and the pressing questions about what sort of political order would follow: who would rule the Mashriq? Within what borders? On what terms? The League of Nation’s imposition of a French Mandate over the territory (excluding Palestine, which was awarded to the British), and France’s establishment of greater Lebanon and the federated states of Syria created new lines on the map, but these lines did not accurately reflect the wishes of many emigrant activists, nor those of the people living in Syria and Lebanon. For the historian, the disjuncture between the emigrant’s territorial origins and their professed national identity presents an immediate issue of categorization. What does one call these emigrants, and how to distinguish between them?

This dissertation attempts to stay faithful to the multiplicity of ways that long-distance nationalists self-identified. I refer to the activists in this thesis as “Syrian,” “Lebanese,” or

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<sup>16</sup> This choice is particularly clear when Sallum Mukarzil wrote his brother’s biography. In a text called *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, Sallum Mukarzil writes the history of Na’um’s political committee, the *Jam’iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*, but refers to himself as Syrian. Sallum Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, xi.

<sup>17</sup> Rihani used the term not only a critic of religious and nationalist particularisms among competing groups of nationalists; his ideas arose out of a distinct humanism that self-consciously sought to blend “Eastern” civilizations with “Western” ones; see Ameen Rihani, *Extremism and Reform*, 56-7. The term “Syrian Lebanese” was a common one in Brazil and Argentina as well. See John Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 99; Also, Gildas Brégain, “Discours et Pratiques Politiques des Intellectuels,” in *Syriens et Libanais d’Amérique du Sud, 1918-1945* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2008), 183.



“Arab” in conformity with their own preferred identities, with the caveat that my usages of this terminology signifies an individual’s position within a nationalist political movement rather than in relation to a national territory, a national territory which emerged after their departure and which (in several cases) they never returned to. Where possible, I have also included biographical information for each activist, including geographical origins. I do so in recognition of the manner in which most of the activists, intellectuals, and journalists included herein arrived in the Americas as Ottoman subjects and identified as such; they “became Syrian” (or Lebanese, or Arab) while abroad,<sup>18</sup> developing new nationalist politics that cast them in a new political relationship with their homeland as well in into new patterns of conflict or cooperation with one another in the *mahjar*.

Whatever its variant, diasporic nationalism was a significant part of the intellectual life of Syrian communities in the Americas from World War I through the 1920s. In the Syrian “colonies” abroad (as emigrants called them, *al-jaliyyat* in Arabic, *colonia* in Spanish and Portuguese), men’s political discussions in cafes, reading rooms, and over political newspapers revolved around the tensions between competing nationalist movements. In textile mills, philanthropic circles, and in private homes, emigrant women engaged the same nationalist debates, from a distinct (and as shall be seen, a more skeptical, critical) perspective. For Syrian emigrant working women, especially the younger generation raised in the America, long-distance nationalism offered paternalism in place of political progress. The paternalistic imagery of the nationalists alienated many Syrian women activists, generating tensions within the Syrian American community. But whatever the tension between emigrant nationalist movements, they rested on a common set of assumptions: that as citizens abroad, emigrants in the *mahjar* bore

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<sup>18</sup> I have borrowed Akram Khater’s usage of “becoming Syrian” in America here. See Khater, “Becoming ‘Syrian’ in America,” 299-300.

responsibility for the homeland's political, economic, and social progress after the War. This sense of patriotic responsibility drove emigrant activists into a distinctively long-distance nationalist mode of political action which bore consequences for Syria and Lebanon as they emerged in the 1920s. But what is "long-distance nationalism"? How did emigrant activists use it to reclaim and redefine their Ottoman homeland? How did it influence emigrant interactions with the state? And what could nationalism offer its transnational citizens, as men and women?

*Long-distance Nationalism: Nationalism across Transnational Spaces*

This dissertation places Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab activists living in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires within a single transnational field as a means of tracing the development of long-distance nationalism between them. As major ports of entry for Ottoman immigrants to the Americas, the "Syrian colonies" in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires were the largest Syrian communities outside the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the proliferation of newspapers, mutual aid societies, and major Syrian and Lebanese employers in all three cities facilitated the continuous circulation of goods, people, and ideas between these communities and the Mashriq. Although scholars have used the term *transnationalism* to describe an expansive array of historical processes, my usage of the term is intentionally limited to "the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" as laid out by Schiller et al.

Within transnational social fields, she argues,

"transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. (They) take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Cristina Szanton-Blanc, and Linda Basch, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (London: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1994), 8.

The term emerged to describe the sociopolitical position of “transmigrants” between two or more nation-states, and it invokes the hybrid consciousness of migrant populations as well as the political and economic complications (and opportunities) they face when dealing with the conflicting governmental agendas of the territorial states they travel across.<sup>20</sup> As a mode of inquiry, transnationalism provides a valuable counterpoint to the Area Studies “container model” popularized by the Chicago School in the 1960s, which framed social histories within the history of nations. The Area Studies model began with a territorially defined space and pursued questions about its people as categorized in larger regional “zones” which Nina Schiller and Andrea Wimmer famously argued contributed to the naturalization of the nation-state and its borders. “Methodological nationalism” was particularly problematic in studies of the Third World, where the Area Studies model became most hegemonic during the Cold War but where national borders were often a particularly recent phenomenon.<sup>21</sup>

Transnational analysis offers a means of framing historical narratives according to indigenous social categories. Rather than imposing a top-down territorial model which relegates migrant populations to the margins, a transnational framework places them at the center of a space defined by their organic lived experience, however far afield. Transnationalism prompts historians to upend older assumptions about human migration – that societies are generally

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<sup>20</sup> Schiller et al. prefer the term *transmigrants* because it refers specifically to the positionality of migrating populations between societies and avoids “placing” them in relation to either the homeland or host society. For this thesis, however, I will use either *migrants* (to refer to the mobility of the populations under discussion), or *emigrants* (when referencing the connections that migrants have with the homeland). I avoid the term *immigrants* where possible because it places migrants in sole relationship with the land of adoption. More than simple semantics, the Arabic terms for Syrian and Lebanese migrants, *al-muhajirin* or sometimes *al-mughtaribin*, invoke connections to the Mashriq and cannot be translated as “immigrants.” It also bears noting that the migration experience also changed how Syrian emigrants spoke about *al-mutakhalifin*, or “those left behind” (in the homeland).

<sup>21</sup> Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences,” *Global Networks* 2, no. 4 (2002): 301-3.

sedentary, that nations are territorially bound, that migration is a linear process brought on by extraordinary events of crises, and that new immigrants naturally assimilate into their new host societies. The Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar* comprised such a transnational geography, held together by peripatetic patterns of migration and flows of money, philanthropic assistance, and political activism. At the same time, it bears noting that the transnationalism of the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar* was neither about “transcending” the political logic of the nation-state system nor a conscious attempt to do so. Rather, living a transnational life was about operating within several distinct national contexts at once, often times with all of the ambiguities, ambivalence, and alienations that come with that.<sup>22</sup> In the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar*, however, living a transnational life at a moment when new nation-states were literally being constructed in the homeland afforded emigrants certain political opportunities (as well as pitfalls); they participated in the construction, invention, and “imagination” of new national societies through a politics that Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron termed “long-distance nationalism.”

*Long-distance nationalism* refers to a “claim to membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of the homeland” which “generates an emotional attachment that is strong enough to compel people to political action that ranges from displaying a home country flag to deciding to return to fight and die in a land they may never have seen.”<sup>23</sup>

It is simultaneously a claim of belonging across transnational space and a claim made within the

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<sup>22</sup> One of the central critiques of Schiller et al.’s thesis about migrant transnationalism has been that if historians pursue migrant agency through informal migration networks they might lose sight of the state and its power over such networks. For a discussion of how “transmigrants” work between states (and cannot “transcend” them), see Donna Gabaccia, “Introduction: Review Symposium, Cultures in Contact,” in *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004): 479.

<sup>23</sup> Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 4. See also Nina Glick Schiller and Georges E. Fouron, “The Generation of Identity: Redefining the Second Generation within a Transnational Social Field,” in Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, eds, *The Changing Face of Home: the Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 193.

framework of the nation-state system; emigrants are, in other words, expressing themselves and acting as citizens of a state regardless of whether they live within a designated national territory. Their agenda was never one of “transcendence” over the nation-state order nor “deterritorialization” of the state itself. Rather, in Syrian and Lebanese long-distance nationalism, the discourse that emigrants “belonged” to the homeland was invoked strategically (and simultaneously) by emigrant activists, lay notables in Syria and Lebanon, clergymen, and even by the French mandatory state. Long-distance nationalist politics entwined Syria and its *mahjar* into a shared politics of transnational connection.

For nationalists abroad, connection with and reclamation of the homeland became the dominant political motif, whether the act of reclamation referred to liberation from the Ottoman Empire (during World War I), Lebanon’s separation from the greater Syrian hinterland (for Lebanese nationalists), or the reconquest and emancipation of Syria from French imperialism (for Syrian and Arab nationalists). At odds as these competing nationalist tendencies were, they shared a common telos of national reclamation and reconnection between homeland and *mahjar* in a participatory politics that demanded political action, activism, petitioning, and provisioning from Syrian and Lebanese emigrants. Reattaching *mahjar* to Mashriq cast the emigrants within a web of social responsibilities and political obligations. Social discourses of obligation, duty, and honor drove the development of political parties, philanthropic groups, and transnational social institutions designed specifically to nurture connections between the Mashriq and the *mahjar*. For long distance nationalists, this transnational social field – Syria and its “colonies” abroad – comprised an organic (if not territorially contiguous) political geography capable of achieving Syrian and Lebanese independence.

As a mode of politics that reconnects Syria and Lebanon with their emigrants, long-

distance nationalism is best thought of as a strategy (one among many) in service to the project of nation-building. It, like transnationalism, does not imply a transcendence over the importance of the nation-state or a decline in its importance. Rather, long-distance nationalism is a politics *in service to* the larger project of the nation-state: to identify a national territory and national community, regardless of domicile. What long-distance nationalism accomplishes that classical treatments of nationalism do not is to deterritorialize a national society. The state remains a territorial entity that serves, embraces, legislates, and disciplines a national body that extends beyond its borders; it is a “trans-border state” that reaches out and selectively claims its emigrants living abroad, calling them settlers, sojourners, or colonists but always invoking their continued loyalties to and duties towards the homeland.<sup>24</sup>

Long-distance nationalism was not unique to the Syrian *mahjar*; it was a common mode of politics shared by sending states associated with the mass migrations of the late nineteenth century. In the mass migrations that peaked between 1860 and 1914, Syrian migrants bound for the Americas moved amongst larger flows of Italians, Irish, German, and Jewish workers; upon arrival, they encountered large settlements of Chinese immigrants as well. The literatures of each of these diasporas illustrates the politics of long-distance nationalism at work: the prominent personalities of both the Italian *Risorgimento* and the irredentist movement that followed it, for example, depended on networks of contact, political and fiscal support from the Italian diaspora.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, German national identity changed over time with the influence of “the *Heimat* abroad” and the lived experiences of German Americans,<sup>26</sup> Irish “St. Patrick’s Day”

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<sup>24</sup>Schiller and Fourn, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 10-2.

<sup>25</sup>Donna Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Samuel L. Bayly, *Immigrants in the Land of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup>Tobias Brinkman, “Jew, Germans or Americans? German-Jewish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O’Donnel et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 132-4.

traditions were born in Irish neighborhoods in Boston and New York,<sup>27</sup> and historians widely credit the Chinese Revolution of 1912 to the transnational participation and leadership of the Chinese diaspora under Sun Yat Sen, himself living in Hawai‘i.<sup>28</sup>

Merging a transnational unit of analysis with a focus on long-distance nationalism captures the degree to which the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar* continued to participate in the intellectual life, philanthropic efforts, activism and political culture of the homeland. Indeed, the ongoing patterns of circular migration, engagement in political discourse, and the persistence of transnational networks of finance, employment, commerce, and personal contact demonstrates that the *mahjar* was less a permanent “place of emigration” and resettlement than a suburb to the Mashriq. Emigrants were not exiles; they remained a significant part of Syrian and Lebanese political society, making claims on the French Mandate state, and framing themselves as a transnational citizenry abroad (a phenomenon Rainer Baubock terms “substantive citizenship,” see below).

*Mahjar* studies, a quickly growing subfield in Syrian and Lebanese social history, is making inquiries into precisely this degree of social coherence. The first major wave of studies on the *mahjar* began with Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi’s *Lebanese in the World* and sought to compare the experiences of Syrians and Lebanese living in the Americas with those in Europe, Africa, and Australia. The degree to which histories of “Syrians everywhere”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Conzen, Kathleen N, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George Pozetta, and Rudolph Vecoli, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (1992): 3-41.

<sup>28</sup>Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawai‘i, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 89-92; Clarence Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese Migrants in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980). One complicating factor in this comparison is that in the Irish, Chinese, and German cases, some iteration of the nation-state existed in the homeland already, where in the Syrian-Lebanese case, the nation-state formula was emerging. The Italian case can serve an ample comparison in this regard; on Italian emigrant participation in the Italian *Resorgimento*, see Donna Gabaccia, “Making Italians at Home and Abroad,” in *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, 35-57.

<sup>29</sup>My reference to “Syrians everywhere” is an adaptation of a decade long project headed by Donna Gabaccia to document the lives of “Italians Everywhere,” formally called *Italian Workers of the World*. Seeking to “query the

resembled one another has since pushed social historians towards more rigorous attempts at connection.<sup>30</sup> What networks of influence held the *mahjar* together? Can these networks explain political change in the *mahjar* or its homeland? The goal of this line of inquiry is to end the emigrants' marginalization from Syrian and Lebanese social history and create an historical narrative that places human geographies (rather than territorial borders) at the forefront. The subfield's adoption of a transnational framework has yielded a recent wealth of histories where emigrants are anything but marginal.

Springing from Akram Khater's observation of the "experience of simultaneity between (histories of Syrians) near and far," this dissertation labors toward establishing connections.<sup>31</sup> It goes about this goal in three dimensions. Like other work in *mahjar* studies, this thesis places the Mashriq and its diaspora into a single analytic field, demonstrating how emigrants influenced the homeland (the first dimension), and how the homeland influenced the diaspora (the second dimension). Additionally, however, I build the claim that peripatetic movements of people, goods, and ideas *between* the Syrian communities in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires constituted a significant third dimension of transnational connection. Links between Syrians abroad were every bit as politically and culturally productive as the *mahjar*'s contact

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tyranny of the national in the discipline of history" through a collaborative project documenting Italian lives lived in the diaspora, the project ultimately yielded findings on the Italian diaspora's significance in supporting, participating in, and even contesting the nineteenth century Italian Risorgimento. On "Italians Everywhere," see Donna Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," in *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999), 1116-7.

<sup>30</sup> Foremost among comparative studies is Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds. *Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Taurus, 1992). The move from comparative histories of diaspora towards connective ones conforms to broader trends in migration studies. See, for example, the *International Review of Social History* Review Symposium issue on Dirk Hoerder's text *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millenium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), particularly Leo Lucassen, "Where do We Go From Here? New Perspectives on Global Migration History," in *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004): 519. On the merits of comparative versus connective frameworks for analyzing global migrations, see also Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds. *Migration, Migration History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (NewYork: Peter Lang, 1997).

<sup>31</sup>Khater, "Becoming 'Syrian' in America," 300.



with home, and what is more, such inter-peripheral linkages remain an under-acknowledged web of influence in the largely bilateral fields of diaspora and immigration studies. By telling the history of the interwar *mahjar* through its transnational social institutions (the press, philanthropic organizations, political associations and clubs, and schools), I can illustrate political change across a multi-sited, transnational space, rather than dialectically between the poles of “homeland” and “diaspora.”

This dissertation is about the Syrian *mahjar*, but it is also about nationalism. Among its most principle findings is that early Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalisms not only had *mahjari* cognates, but that each movement depended upon (or interacted with) important activist groups operating in the Americas. The modern states of the Mashriq which emerged after World War I were not only creations of the victorious Entente Powers and select partners within Syria and Lebanon; activists in the *mahjar* also played significant roles in constructing (and later, in protesting) the French Mandate. The following chapters empirically demonstrate that political trends in the *mahjar* impacted the contests between nationalists and colonial administrators in Beirut and Damascus, whether through emigrant petitions to the 1919 Conférence de la Paix, cash remittances to Syrian revolutionaries in 1925, or the construction of schools and orphanages on plans drawn up in Brazil. Such practical examples of *mahjari* influence on the homeland are multitude, in this thesis and in the subfield generally. But what does a transnational perspective joining *mahjar* to Mashriq accomplish in theoretical terms? In the historiography on interwar Middle Eastern nationalisms, what can the *mahjar* add to the conversation?

Long-distance nationalism, as it emerged among Syrians and Lebanese in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, was a malleable, diverse form of politics rooted less in ideas and sentiments than in action. Like the more well-known Syrian communities in Cairo and Paris, the

American *mahjar* had its intellectuals, who promoted their ideas concerning the history, scope, and destiny of the nation in the *mahjar* through a widening print culture.<sup>32</sup> But as Carol Hakim argues of nationalisms in this World War I moment, “the appearance of fledgling national representations and agendas did not, however, presage their subsequent development in an orderly, linear, and predictable fashion.”<sup>33</sup> Rather, the Arab, Syrian (“Syrianist”), and Lebanese (“Lebanist”) nationalist movements as described in the literature on Middle Eastern nationalisms—that is, as movements with distinctive and competing visions of the territorial borders, historical identity, and political destiny of their national homeland—were the result of a fraught and complex series of negotiations between activists living in the Mashriq and abroad as well as between these activists and the Great Powers of the Entente. During the War, these movements each “displayed some elements of modern nationalism but had not developed into articulate and coherent nationalist ideologies of movements” until after 1918.<sup>34</sup> That said, historians who write about nationalisms in the Mashriq tend to break down the post-World War I tensions, ties, and competitions between the Hashimite Arab nationalist movement under Emir Faysal, who established a short-lived Arab monarchy in Syria between 1918 and 1920, and two nationalist projects in partnership with the Entente, subsumed under the headings of Syrianism and Lebanonism.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Syrian communities in Cairo and Paris were considered the two greatest intellectual outposts beyond the Mashriq during this period. Activists in the Americas typically allied with movements in Paris and Cairo, and it was widely thought that they depended on them for leadership. A 1918 report from U.S. Consul to Cairo Yale concluded, for example, that “As to the Lebanese, who are in the two Americas, they depend to a certain degree for their opinions upon their leaders in Egypt and Europe.” Thompson linked this to “a certain amount of propaganda (from those cities) in favor of the French (that was) carried on by Lebanese in the Americas; this is particularly true... in South American countries.” NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59, Roll 0381, Yale, Consul to Cairo to Leland Harrison, Dept. of State, 28 January 1918 Report “The Syrian Question Report #12,” document 763.72119/1717, Pages 13-4..

<sup>33</sup> Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Second Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Raghd al-Solh, *Lebanon and*

Countering older histories of Arab nationalism that dated its emergence in the late nineteenth century, Hasan Kayali connects the development of a politicized Arabism to Syrian intellectuals' disenchantment with the Ottoman Empire's conduct in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Even these intellectuals' rhetoric railing against the Ottoman government's "Turkification" policies in the Syrian provinces, he argues roundly, are most fruitfully read in the context of a Syrian politics of administrative autonomy, rather than in the vein of an ethnic nationalism that did not yet exist.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, until 1916 expressions of Arabism tended towards conversation within an Ottomanist framework, working towards reform within the Empire rather than towards a separatist ethnic nationalism. C. Ernest Dawn similarly finds that the Arab nationalist sentiments took root in Syria after the arrival of Emir Faysal's Arab troops, and that during most of the War, even the Hashimite Emir himself deployed nationalism selectively, incompletely, and always in reference to a larger project of Islamic revival.<sup>37</sup> "Arab nationalism" as it emerged in 1919—that is, as a demand for Syria's immediate independence (including Mount Lebanon and Palestine), the rejection of foreign Mandates and Zionist colonization, economic and political unity under an Arab constitutional system under Emir Faysal, recognized by the world's powers—was the product of compromise between the Hashimite Emir and his elite supporters in Syria, a unifying ideal he deployed as he prepared his appeals for the League Nations. According to Philip Khoury, the urban political elites of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama adopted Hashimite Arab nationalism only after 1918. This recently "unified and coherent local upper class," comprised of urban merchants, former Ottoman administrators, and religious leaders

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*Arabism: National Identity and State Formation, 1936-1945* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2004); Asher Kaufmann, "Between Paris and Beirut," *Reviving Phoenicia: the Search for National Identity in Lebanon* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 79-87; Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 229-31.

<sup>36</sup> Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 12-5.

<sup>37</sup> C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 140.

proved the lynchpin for Faysal's movement and bid for a Syrian-Arab state, but Khoury reminds the reader that this class joined forces with the Hashimite Emir because his project proved "a viable and useful substitute for 'Ottomanism,' an ideology which after 1918 no longer served (this class's) interests."<sup>38</sup>

Lebanism, a term used by Hakim to distinguish it from later forms of Lebanese nationalism, similarly emerged during the War and in contest with both the Arabist and Syrianist movements. The particularistic notion that Mount Lebanon was culturally, historically, and religiously distinct from the rest of the Mashriq had deep roots: Carol Hakim and Kamal Salibi trace them back to debates amongst Maronite clergy and French-educated intellectuals in the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> But the convergence of Lebanonism with patriotic politics (and later with nationalism) came much later, and historians of modern Lebanon caution against conflating nineteenth century preoccupations with Phoenicianism with the modern, post-Ottoman Lebanese nationalism.<sup>40</sup> The political Lebanonism that actually produced a project for a distinct Lebanese nation state had its origins in the Decentralization Movement (*Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya* and the Beirut Reform Society), a push by Lebanese elites linked to Mount Lebanon's Administrative Council under the Ottoman *mutasarriffiyya*. Decentralist parties like the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* (Alliance Libanaise in French, established in 1909) sought the preservation of Mount Lebanon and Beirut's local administrative autonomy against the perceived threat of direct

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<sup>38</sup> Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: the Politics of Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1987), 19.

<sup>39</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 29-34; Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: a History of Lebanon Reconsidered* 132-7.

<sup>40</sup> Asher Kaufmann, *Reviving Phoenicia: the Search for Identity in Lebanon* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 8-10; Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State under the Mandate* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 23-9; Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 174-5. Kamal Salibi explains this caution as a result of "the war over Lebanese history," the battle between competing narratives concerning the historical identity of the Lebanese which came with the 1975-1990 Civil War; Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 200-15.

Ottoman rule from Istanbul.<sup>41</sup> But although these parties were the first to delineate a “greater Lebanese” political entity (the *Grand Liban*) that joined historical Mount Lebanon to the coastal cities of Saida, Akkar, and Tripoli and the fertile Biqaa’ valley, they would do in fits in starts during World War I, only after the continuation of Ottoman rule in Lebanon looked increasingly untenable, and only in contest with countervailing Arabist and Syrianist politics.<sup>42</sup>

Of these three national tendencies, Syrianism was at one point the most popular among Syrian and Lebanese emigrants, but by 1919 it had become a casualty of strategic negotiations between Syrian elites, Emir Faysal, and the victorious powers of the Entente. Syrianism emerged as an inchoate but powerful movement against continued Ottoman rule in Syria, with an attendant desire to preserve greater Syria’s territorial integrity (commonly described as spanning from the Taurus Mountains to the Suez isthmus, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea). Like Lebanism, Syrianism was a politics that was particularly connected to activists in the *mahjar*; both movements had connections to wartime relief committees led by emigrant activists during the War, and in both cases emigrant committees working in the Americas linked themselves with nationalist political parties already operating in Egypt and Europe after 1917. These parties depended on transnational philanthropic, intellectual, and press networks branching across the Americas, which they used to compete with one another over constituents as well as for the attentions of the Great Powers (particularly the French).<sup>43</sup> The idealism and expansiveness of the greater Syrian project unified the efforts of Syrian activists during the War, but shortly afterward the many obstacles that confronted it prompted most of these activists to embrace the Arabist or Lebanist movements. Among these obstacles: the

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<sup>41</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 215.

<sup>42</sup> Kais Firro, “Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (2004), 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 215.

question of Palestine (claimed by the Syrianists but also by the British and their partners in the Zionist movement), mounting demands for Lebanese separation, concerns about ethnic and confessional divisions within the proposed Syrian territory, and France's endorsement of the greater Lebanese idea.<sup>44</sup> While it emerged from the same wellspring of transnational wartime activism and its leaders experimented with a blend of late Ottoman reform ideas and modern nationalism, the project for greater Syria was drowned out of a nationalist discourse dominated by Francophile Lebanese nationalists, on one hand, and the anticolonial Arab nationalists on the other. Put simply, the Syrianist blend of territorial unionism and French-managed developmentalism became an anachronism during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, because France declined to support Syrian unity, and Faysal's Arab nationalists rejected foreign tutelage. After the War, greater Syrianists took new sides in an increasingly bifurcated political atmosphere; most of them opted for Hashemite Arab nationalism.

Taken cumulatively, these studies demonstrate that the interrelationships between Syrianist, Lebanist, and Hashemite-Arab parties were intensely uneasy, fluid, and complex during World War I, and they each cohered into more completely "nationalist" political movements in the months between the War's end in 1918 and when the League of Nations granted France mandate over Syria at the San Remo Conference in April 1920. During that period, each movement laid out conflicting territorial ambitions and vied with one another for the attentions of the international forum, but they all claimed to represent the political assertions of urban elites, constitutionalists, the professional bourgeoisie, and diasporic activists.<sup>45</sup> Despite

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<sup>44</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 220-1.

<sup>45</sup> Kaufman, "Between Paris and Beirut," 85; Andrew Arsan, "'This is the Age of Associations': Committees, Petitions, and the Roosts of Interwar Middle Eastern Internationalism," *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 2 (2012): 181. James Gelvin argued that major groups excluded by these proceedings, particularly non-elite Syrian merchants, minor religious scholars, craftsmen, and young men who thought Faysal's proposed leadership in Syria too religiously conservative or who distrusted the high politics of elites who sought foreign sponsorship. These individuals, argues Gelvin, practiced a mass politics which made its appeals through public demonstration (parades,

significant divisions between them, the mode of politics they practiced shows remarkable convergence around the issues of constitutionalism, rights of representation, self-determination, economic and social developmentalism, and alliance-building with the Allied Powers through informal diplomacy.<sup>46</sup> Of course, even though nationalism became the dominant mode of politics in Syria and Lebanon shortly after World War I, historians have also demonstrated the enduring vitality of Ottomanist ideas during the War,<sup>47</sup> and of internationalist, socialist, and fascist politics in interwar Syria and Lebanon.<sup>48</sup> It bears noting that although this dissertation concerns itself with the development of nationalist politics in the *mahjar*, non-nationalist (or anti-nationalist) alternatives were never far away, influencing and informing patriotic cultures in Lebanon, Syria, and their respective diasporas.

This study pulls in transnational, long-distance iterations of Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalisms through the 1920s to further diversify the historical narrative on nationalism in the interwar Middle East, while simultaneously looking into the political partnerships and strategic alliances which made certain types of nationalism an attractive ideological option (even though it was not the inevitable, or only, choice). I argue that political partnerships—negotiations between individual activists operating across the *mahjar*, political committees and their supporters, and between these and the powers of Entente—had a greater impact on aims the WWI-era nationalist movements than did ideology. This is not to say that ideology or patriotic affect did not matter,

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protests, spectacles, etc). This form of politics was also evident in the *mahjar*, although not dwelt on in this thesis as completely as the politics of the press, petition, and committees. See James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> See Simon Jackson, "Diaspora Politics and Developmental Empire: the Syro-Lebanese at the League of Nations," in *Arab Studies Journal* 21, no. 2 (2013), 171-4; Reem Bailony, "Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public: the Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt," *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies* 1 (2013); 8-29.

<sup>47</sup> Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12-5.

<sup>48</sup> Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 255-78.

but rather that national identity remained malleable in the context of the war and the changing nature of the political partnerships that underpinned it. National identity was a significant and divisive issue in the *mahjar*, to be sure; but this thesis views “the nation” as a polysemous “floating signifier,” inscribed variously by activist and encapsulating a multiplicity of historical, confessional, patriotic allegiances, and personal loyalties.<sup>49</sup> During the War, the nationalist organizations in the *mahjar* contained within them serious ambiguities and disputes over the identity of the nations they purported to represent. Individual activists from opposite sides of the ideological spectrum collaborated and depended on one another. Put simply, the *mahjar*’s experience with Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalisms was a messy affair, and the pattern of long-distance nationalism they produced was eminently malleable, ready to be bent, shaped, and hammered into place as emigrant loyalties to (or protests against) foreign powers, nationalist personalities at home, or between one another shifted and changed.

The transnational body of sources in this dissertation reveal the extent to which emigrant political action and activism outside the Middle East conditioned the course of national politics at home. During the War, Syrian nationalists recruited young men to fight for the Entente. In 1919, Lebanese nationalists in the *mahjar* pursued an alliance with France, and helped to engineer two Lebanese Delegations to the Paris Peace Conference. In the 1920s, Arab nationalists funded an array of social institutions in the homeland: schools, hospitals, and orphanages, in the interest of demonstrating Syria’s capacity for self-determination and national independence. Each endeavor (and many more like them) created opportunities for nationalists in Syria and Lebanon: the emigrant soldiers recruited by Syrian nationalist Shukri Ghanim and his partners abroad not only fought in Palestine, they also became an important symbol linking

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<sup>49</sup> James Scott, 1990, 18-9, via Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 27-8.



Syria's political future to the Entente. Similarly, in addition to including notable emigrant personalities, both Lebanese Delegations of 1919 delivered plans for a greater Lebanese state written by nationalists living abroad, that was endorsed by written petitions of thousands of Lebanese emigrants in the *mahjar*.

Recognizing these transnational connections, historians of Syrian and Lebanese nationalisms are beginning to write the *mahjar* back into histories of the modern Mashriq. Recent studies show a desire to include emigrants, but they still hold fast to a predominantly territorial framework. In Lebanese studies, for instance, emigrants are present but cursorily placed in a separate section that fits imperfectly within a more conventional narrative focused on high politics and Franco-Lebanese power relationships.<sup>50</sup> In Syrian studies, it is rarer for emigrants to appear in the narrative at all,<sup>51</sup> a tendency that reflects the reification of the state and its interests in historical writings on nationalism (since Independence, Lebanon has been more adept at "claiming" its emigrants as a potent source of remittance revenues, as well as more invested in commemorating emigration as part of its national heritage). Among historians of the *mahjar*, Akram Khater, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, and Sarah Gualtieri have argued for a more thorough analysis of Syrian and Lebanese politics between the diaspora and the homeland, and have pointed to transnational modes of analysis as the means to accomplish it.<sup>52</sup> Using French

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<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Asher Kaufman, "Syro-Lebanese in America," *Reviving Phoenicia: the Search for Identity in Lebanon* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 70-9. Carol Hakim does a more thorough-going discussion of emigrant activists within debates on the *Grand Liban* project prior World War I but is concerned more with elite politics than with transnational activism. Still, Hakim represents the most recent trend towards reading the emigrants' intellectual history within a Lebanese context, "The Emigrants' Views: Greater Syria or Greater Lebanon?" in *The Origins of the Lebannese National Idea*, 214-223.

<sup>51</sup> There are exceptions. Isa As'ad's *Tarikh Homs* lays out the political history of Syria's diaspora within the narrative of the anti-colonial Syrian Nationalist Movement. In this case, however, As'ad has chronicled his own involvement in the Movement, and his role in connecting Syrian activists "at home" with those working abroad. His book remains a valuable and distinct attempt at more thorough integration of the Syrian *mahjar* within the history of its homeland. Isa As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, vol. 2 (Homs: Mutraniyyat Homs al-Urthodoxiyya, 1983).

<sup>52</sup> See Akram Fouad Khater, "Becoming 'Syrian' in America: a Global Geography of Ethnicity and Nation," in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 299-33; Sarah Gualtieri, "Nation and Migration: Emergent Arabism and Diasporic Nationalism," in *Between Arab and White*, 81-130; Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, "The

diplomatic documents, Gildas Brégain has written the most comprehensive transnational history available on Syrian and Lebanese nationalists operating in South America. Her study shows ably that a transnational frame delivers an entirely new view of how the French Mandate operated beyond the territorial spaces of the Mashriq, particularly in Argentina.<sup>53</sup> But by drawing exclusively on Francophone archival records, the Syrian and Lebanese networks beyond the Mandate's reach remain unexplored and underexposed. This project's emphasis on non-official materials written by emigrants themselves labors towards accomplishing that goal.

By focusing on emigrant action and activism and drawing from sources written and circulated by emigrants themselves, this dissertation builds the argument that long-distance nationalists participated in the politics of nation-making during World War I and into the French Mandatory period. But these activists did not only see themselves as nationalists. Ultimately, they saw themselves as transnational citizens of a modern Syria and Lebanon, an affirmation that conditioned how they related to the new Mandatory states that emerged in the homeland after 1920. But in a brand new territorial nation-state under foreign management, what did it mean to simultaneously be a citizen and non-resident? What happened if emigrant claims to the rights of citizens did not exactly square with the goals of the French authorities in Beirut and Damascus? In addressing these questions, this dissertation argues that the wartime role emigrant activists played in facilitating the French Mandate opened the door for a transnational form of substantive citizenship in the *mahjar*. As French officials sought to extend the "colonial civic order" into the pockets of Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living in the Americas, both supporters and opponents

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*Nahda*, the Press, and the Construction and Dissemination of a Radical Worldview," *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 15-34.

<sup>53</sup> Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amerique du Sud*, 137-9. Among unpublished manuscripts, though, Maria del Mar Narbona Logroño completed a dissertation drawing together activists in Brazil more successfully; see her *The Development of Nationalist Identities in French Syria and Lebanon: a Transnational Dialogue with Arab Immigrants to Argentina and Brazil, 1915-1929* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007).

of the Mandate framed themselves as transnational citizens, regardless of the ambiguous nature of their actual legal status.

*Transnational Activism and Substantive Citizenship: Making Claims on the Homeland*

This study begins with the assertion that the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar* was a lively social field, with its own patterns of circular migration, employment, and commerce, its own intellectual cultures and political centers of gravity, and with its own patterns of political praxis and activism, and that very often the creative capacity of this field came from linkages between the Syrian communities abroad. This choice of a starting point, however, also illustrates the manner in which the *mahjar* does not conform to established historical models of “diaspora,” where mobility is driven by a single cataclysmic event, emigrant writers seek principally to engage the homeland after dispersal, and sentimentality, nostalgia, and alienation define their genre.<sup>54</sup> The emigrants in this dissertation are not “exiles” but rather “Syrians abroad,” and their experience of the *mahjar* is one of agency, action, participation. What distinguishes long-distance nationalism from the experience of exile is action: long-distance nationalism is a participatory politics that commands action, driving patterns of migration, sociability, philanthropy, and intellectual discourse across transnational space.<sup>55</sup> In Nina Glick Schiller’s words, long-distance nationalism “does not exist only in the domains of the imagination and sentiment. It leads to specific actions... long-distance nationalists may (seek to) vote, demonstrate, contribute money, create works of art, give birth, and fight, kill, and die all for a “homeland” in which they may

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<sup>54</sup> Traditional models of Diaspora point to a quite specific model driven by a forced dispersal of a people through a catastrophic event which continues to define (or at least substantially) mark the culture of a community in exile. More recent theoretical work on diaspora seeks to expand the model for what constitutes a “diaspora” as a global society, but for the most part “diaspora studies” continue to pursue the themes of loss, exile, and emigrant nostalgia for the homeland or a past “golden age.” Such studies are valuable, but too often emigrants’ agency is ignored, and the emphasis on emigrant identities and sentiments undermines a more thorough exploration of emigrant action, activism, etc. For a discussion on what constitutes a “diaspora,” see Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 23-5. See this dissertation’s conclusion for a discussion of the issues involved in using modern definitions of diaspora for the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar*.

<sup>55</sup> Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 25.

never have lived.”<sup>56</sup>

But appended to declarations of national belonging, shared traditions, and political activism is a notion of transnational citizenship defined not by recognition by a state but by relationships of responsibility and obligation. *Substantive citizenship* refers to the citizenship’s participatory sense and emanates not from the state but from people who make claims on it. Developed by Rainer Baubock, the theory works through the contradictions between “the legal status of citizen and the actuality of state practices” by focusing on the ways that societies (whether at home or abroad) invoke a state’s obligations to its citizenry or take over aspects of provisioning for that citizenry.<sup>57</sup> The collective mobilization of a society “to protect themselves against discrimination, gain rights, or make contributions to the development of that state and the life of the people within it” comprises a central aspect of national citizenship.<sup>58</sup> But when a citizen body who is either absent from its national territory or not formally recognized as belonging by its government, this citizen body practices substantive citizenship. By acting “as if” they are formal, legal citizens (regardless of whether they held documents reflecting that status), transnational emigrants and activists still claim agency, authority, and power in relationship to that state. Substantive citizenship emerges in contexts where an emerging nation-state seeks support from its diaspora as a means to perform its functions. The Syrian *mahjar* became a transnational “site for political engagements... a public space in which political action extend(ed) across state borders.”<sup>59</sup> This political action, these contests, were not only between emigrant activists, but also with the Syrian and Lebanese states. In this dissertation, substantive

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<sup>56</sup> Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Rainer Baubock, *Transnational Citizenship: Membership and Rights in International Migration* (Aldershot, Hants, England: L. E. Elgar, 1994).

<sup>58</sup> Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Rainer Baubock, “Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism,” *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 704.

citizenship is an extension of interwar political culture, the performative aspect of long-distance nationalism.

Private philanthropy was one of the most significant means by which Syrian and Lebanese emigrants laid claim upon the homeland as a transnational citizenry abroad. Sending relief payments, building schools and orphanages, and providing scholarships to Syrians and Lebanese to study abroad were as much expressions of *mahjari* citizenship as petitions to the League of Nations, emigrant support for the Mandate (or on the other hand, for the Great Syrian Revolt), emigrant participation in the census of 1921 or application for citizenship under the Mandate. Historians who write about philanthropy and charity in the modern Middle East illustrate how philanthropic practices blended into the politics of citizenship. In Egypt, for example, Mine Ener argues that the waning of state authority at the local level after 1900 produced a boom in private philanthropic organization, empowering local merchantile elites. By World War I, many of these philanthropic societies transformed into quasi-nationalist organizations, run by political parties and undertaking charity work in the name of the nation.<sup>60</sup>

Ener's argument that the "politics of benevolence" converged the politics of citizenship and national development post-WWI also holds in French Syria and Lebanon, where middle class activists, nationalists, and female reformers each entered into a pattern of appeal and provisioning with French authorities that Elizabeth Thompson calls the "colonial civic order."<sup>61</sup> Thompson argues that as the French set about setting up their Mandates in Syria and Lebanon in the early 1920s, assuming state control over the many philanthropic initiatives then working for local medical, educational, and social relief presented one of the High Commissioner's principle

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<sup>60</sup> Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 100-2; 105.

<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1.

goals (as well as one of its most hard-won). Private organizations (like *Zahrat al-Ihsan* in Beirut) as well as international groups like the Red Cross had worked in the area for a number of years, establishing a social services network that, Thompson argues, was largely female-run.<sup>62</sup> During the early 1920s, the Mandatory government imposed state oversight over local charities, leading to (Thompson argues) the devaluation of women's labor in this sector but also channeling philanthropic endeavors back towards the interests of the state.<sup>63</sup> Interactions like this generated a new state-society dialectic that defines Thompson's "colonial civic order," and struggles over who would provide for Beirut's poor (and under whose terms) constituted one facet of colonial citizenship under the French Mandate, matched by activists' claims for educational improvements, public works projects, and extension of women's legal rights through petitioning. But from the *mahjar*, transnational philanthropy and committee-based activism constituted an outsized portion of how emigrants practiced substantive citizenship, not merely because distance made other forms of local political activist difficult but because emigrant nationalists continued to argue that private philanthropy (not French managed relief) was the most immediate means of preserving and advancing the cause of national sovereignty and eventual independence.

For their part, the French authorities in Syria and Lebanon pursued an uneven series of policies regarding the nationality and citizenship status of Syrian and Lebanese emigrants in the Americas. On one hand, tax-paying emigrants retained full citizenship rights, they were enumerated on the Mandate's census and given power of appeal through the Mandate's consular offices. On the other hand, emigrants were not formally given suffrage, nor was the Mandatory government entirely forthcoming in matters of travel documents or national identification. The French Mandate state envisioned the Syria and Lebanese *mahjar* as a convenient political

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<sup>62</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 93.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 84-5.

constituency, to be counted when necessary but not closely consulted in political matters. But the pattern of citizenship as a participatory (if managed) affair identified by Thompson also held true in the *mahjar*. Syrian and Lebanese emigrants acted as citizens across transnational space influenced not only their activism towards the homeland, but also underpinned the development of a transnational political culture in their communities abroad. By acknowledging the ways that emigrants interacted with the emerging states of French Syria and Lebanon, historians can place them at the foreground of the analysis, rather than granting the Mandatory state the unquestioned privilege of classifying who is Syrian, who is Lebanese, and who remained at the margins of these national societies.

*Long-distance Nationalist Culture? Transnational Activism, Nationalism, and Gender*

To live within the Syrian and Lebanese communities abroad was to be folded into transnational networks of obligation, patronage, activism, and social responsibility. The same geography established by long-distance nationalist activism influenced the political culture of the interwar *mahjar*. This dissertation conceptualizes political culture as the interaction between agency and structure, a dialectic identified by Pierre Bourdieu as the *habitus*. The *habitus* comprises the “principles which generate and organize practices and representations... without presupposing (an individual’s) conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”<sup>64</sup> Individuals connect with one another through practices, representations, and systems of meaning conditioned not only by the simple sum of their own aims and desires but also by what larger social structures have deemed possible. For the individual cultural agent interacting with larger social structures (*social fields*, in Bourdieu’s

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<sup>64</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures and the Habitus,” in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72-95. Translated by R. Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. My use of *habitus* in this thesis is adapted from McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Culture Change*, 14-6.

terminology), these structures are partially (or totally) obscured, despite the ways they condition, structure, or channel individuals towards a specific praxis.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, the cultural and political perspectives of individual agents are very often themselves shaped by the patterns of the *habitus*.<sup>66</sup> For Bourdieu, the value in exploring the *habitus* is to get at the subjectivity of the people living within a given social field: how do individuals “make” society? How do social systems inspire, pattern, regulate, or even constrain certain types of social action? How and why do some acts, even seemingly insignificant ones, change the *habitus*? How did the experience of global labor migration, French colonialism, and the formation of a transnational social field influence the formation of long-distance nationalist cultures in the Syrian *mahjar*? Can Bourdieu’s “culture engine” help illustrate the link between this *mahjar*’s transnational social institutions and the political culture nurtured by them? The concept of *habitus* guides the principle aim of this thesis: I argue that the development of transnational social institutions, print culture, and transnational social activism created a *mahjari* social field which developed its own ways of being political.

If the *habitus* of long-distance nationalism filtered through the institutions that held Syria’s colonies together, and if individual agency was both channeled and checked through these structures, then the inequities and complementarities of class, ethnicity, and gender were reflected and inscribed in these structures as well. Because this dissertation relies principally on periodicals, club records, and publications produced by the bourgeoisie, this study focuses on the transnational middle class. The reader should also bear in mind, however, that the *mahjar* also has its working classes, urban poor, and the rural peasants in the Syrian communities abroad, and that each group had limited access to the societies and spaces this thesis focuses on. The sharply

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<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 79-80.

<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus, and Practices,” *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 80-3.



defined bourgeois notion of respectable patriotic activism that dominated the *mahjar*'s newspapers and political committees demonstrates that although these activists mobilized more widely across the lines of gender, class, and confession, during the 1920s, their principal audience remained the emigrant middle class specifically. Within this class, a "polite" form of familial nationalism identified Syrian men and women as its objects for reform. As a result, nationalist organizations emphasized self-improvement and social uplift within circumscribed, homosocial spaces. For women (especially working women), this new turn was particularly limiting: nationalist organizations and activists who had embraced women's work and activism during the War began to protest against this "intrusion" into male spaces during the 1920s. For such women living in the Americas, the ideological options afforded by nationalism looked bleaker, especially during a time when the international women's movement provided potential for a political future more in tune with working women's lived experience. The final part of this dissertation thus explores how the new, familial nationalism influenced patterns of sociability and discourses about women's places in the 1920s *mahjar*.

Gender has been a highly relevant and well-explored theme for historians looking at nationalism and social activism in the modern Middle East. Historians of Egypt have been most successful in combining analyses of gender and nationalism, owing in significant part to interconnections between the *Hizb al-Wafd* and the Egyptian women's movement under Huda Sha'arawi. Beth Baron's investigation of the "Ladies' Demonstrations" during the 1919 Egyptian Revolution opened up a new mode of inquiry: to what degree did Egyptian women's nationalist objectives resonate with their goals as feminists? If these women pressed their claims as "mothers of the nation," how did familialist rhetoric help (or hinder) their cause as women?<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 107-10.

During the 1920s, the predicament of women nationalists became clear in variety of contexts in the Arab world: by framing their goals for women's education and advancement within the paternalistic language of the duties of patriotic motherhood, female activists in Egypt,<sup>68</sup> Palestine,<sup>69</sup> Syria, and Lebanon encountered difficulty in countering the patriarchal inequities within the nationalist movements they participated in.<sup>70</sup>

As a critical mode for the discussion of nationalist political culture, this dissertation incorporates gender as a significant category of analysis. Building on existing studies on the Syrian and Lebanese women in the *mahjar*,<sup>71</sup> it seeks to explain how (and why) men and women participated in long-distance nationalist activism in distinct ways. Many of the institutions that linked the *mahjar* to the Mashriq were masculine spaces: the press, patriotic clubs, reading rooms, and even the café were places where new definitions of a masculine culture of the citizen were worked out,<sup>72</sup> but these spaces were simultaneously policed to limit women's access to certain types of public politics. Syrian and Lebanese women, in turn, found more "polite" pathways into nationalist activism, working in private philanthropy, cultural education, and in their own women's organizations to promote a patriotic Syrian womanhood. During World War I, women activists promoted a patriotic feminism that envisioned the nationalist movement as the

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<sup>68</sup> Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: the Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 168-72.

<sup>69</sup> Ellen Fleischmann, *The Nation and its 'New' Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 63-91.

<sup>70</sup> Thompson, "Civil Rights: Patriotic Motherhood and Religious Law Reform," in *Colonial Citizens*, 141-54.

<sup>71</sup> Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger: 1997); Khater, *Inventing Home*; Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004), 71-4; Maria del Mar Logrono Narbona, "The 'Woman Question' in the Aftermath of the Great Syrian Revolt," *al-Ra'ida Magazine* 24, no. 116; 10-5.

<sup>72</sup> While the influence of interwar nationalisms on Arab feminism and women's political cultures in the Middle East has been thoroughly covered, there is comparatively little research available on interwar patriotic masculinities and "men's spaces." Wilson Chacko Jacob's *Working Out Egypt* is an important exception; he uses both Egyptian newspapers and those of Syrian émigrés to show the emergence of anti-colonial and nationalist spaces that were simultaneously defined as masculine; *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 65-8.

means for female emancipation: as mothers, wives, and sisters to the beleaguered homeland they raised monies, sewed clothing, blankets, preserved foods, and even took up wage work to support the nationalist movement. In the 1920s, however, nationalists sought to limit women's access to formal politics, driving a wedge between two generations of *mahjari* feminists: those who saw service to the nation (as mothers and wives) as paramount, and a younger generation born in the *mahjar* that pushed for a more internationalist feminism that questioned the nationalism of poetry, propaganda, and petitions still loved by their male compatriots. The tensions that emerged within the nationalist "family," between men and women activists, and the way that these tensions influenced gender patterns in the *mahjar* are discussed in this dissertation's final two chapters.

*"Moveable Texts:" Methodological Considerations*

In order to successfully map out and investigate the transnational social networks and institutions built by Syrian and Lebanese living in the *mahjar*, this project depends upon a transnational body of source materials. Thankfully, the conduits of migration, personal contact, philanthropic and political assistance that linked Syrians living in New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires were archivally fecund, producing immense collections of non-official, socially produced texts: periodicals and newspapers printed in the *mahjar*, the records and ephemera of ethnic clubs and philanthropic societies, Church records, petitions, and personal correspondence. Each of these documents also migrated, typically along the same conduits as their authors, and they helped to create the very connectivities this dissertation seeks to illustrate. Collectively I call them "moveable texts." Their production provided a discursive forum for emigrants to discuss politics, organize, or agitate across the *mahjar*, and their circulation nurtured new national "imagined communities," making them ideal artifacts for the historian pursuing long-distance *mahjari* nationalisms.

Moveable texts usually themselves have remarkable itineraries: most of the materials used in this thesis had originally been printed in New York City, São Paulo, or Buenos Aires at one of the *mahjar*'s many Syrian printing presses. Publishing houses sprang up in all three cities amidst the commercial hubs of the Syrian communities by the turn of the twentieth century. More than just an office, printing houses commonly had their own reading rooms, cafes, and very often their own social clubs; they presented the Syrian colony with space for the public presentation and debate of ideas, and the *mahjar*'s intelligentsia organized within and around these printing concerns (many were printers themselves). In time, reading rooms expanded into full libraries, where periodicals, poetry, plays, and propaganda were dutifully preserved during the interwar years. By World War II, however, most of the *mahjar*'s private libraries closed, and their collections were subsequently scattered into individual collections or delivered to research libraries across four continents. By recovering these archival fragments and fitting them together, this research reconstructs the social and political culture from the perspective of its reading rooms; it captures the ideological persuasions, moral outlooks, and agendas of the newspapermen and activists who ran them.

Using materials from libraries in Beirut, Boston, Minneapolis, Detroit, Chicago, and Washington DC, I have partially reconstructed the collections of some of the *mahjar*'s major publishers,<sup>73</sup> social clubs,<sup>74</sup> and prominent individuals,<sup>75</sup> tracing the trajectory of these moveable

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<sup>73</sup> During the course of research for this thesis, I amalgamated portions of the original collections of *al-Huda Press* (New York), *Dar al-Tiba'a wa-l-Nashr al-Arabiyya* (São Paulo). Both presses had close connections with diasporic political parties, and both maintained libraries and social parlors during the interwar years.

<sup>74</sup> In particular, the *Hizb al-Fatat* and *al-Nadi al-Homsi* in São Paulo, the *Jama'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*, *Jama'iyyat al-Suriyya al-Jadida*, and the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of New York, and the *Hizb al-Watani al-'Arabi* in Buenos Aires, among others.

<sup>75</sup> This thesis identified the personal libraries of poet Ilyas Qunsul (Buenos Aires), poet and activist Najib Sawaya (New York and São Paulo,) and *al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* [the Pen League] public intellectual 'Abd al-Massih Haddad (New York) through their annotations in volumes or periodicals, dedications of materials to them, or postage stamps in their name. I also consulted the Philip Hitti papers at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, tempering them with his book collection stored at the American University of Beirut.

texts in the meantime. Two practices common among the interwar Syrian reading public has made the pursuit of moveable texts possible: commercial imprinting and personal annotation. The social clubs and political parties of the interwar *mahjar* had their own periodicals, their own publishing houses, and even their own libraries, and materials entered into these libraries were imprinted, stamped, or embossed with the repository's logo. When these institutions closed (many of them did so during World War II, through a combination of changing interests, loss of political relevance, or the community's shift from Arabic to host society vernaculars), these materials found their way into the personal collections of prominent Syrian emigrants. Oftentimes this transfer came with an annotation: a message from the political party to the recipient, or simply the recipient's name and a date of receipt. The annotation served as a record of transfer but also a declaration of ownership. When these texts found their way into research libraries, it was usually as part of a prominent émigré's estate, but a clear chain of transfer can be pursued through the series of imprints and annotations the material bears. In this way, the print culture of the interwar *mahjar* provides rich insight into the intellectual life and social connections of its participants, not only as a series of texts, but also as mobile physical artifacts. Where possible, this dissertation maintains that duality.

Newspapers, periodicals, and other materials produced in the printing houses of the *mahjar* together constituted the most ubiquitous manifestation of Syria's print culture abroad, so much so that these media helped create a (trans)national community. But while newspapers provided both grist and glue for "making a nation" in Syrian communities abroad, sitting alone the infrastructure of the press is merely that: structure. Without flattening the complex series of interactions, patterns of cooperation and competition that went into the production and syndication of the *mahjar*'s newspaper industry (processes discussed at length in Chapter 2),

newspapers were made to be read, discussed, and debated by a widespread reading public. Without accounting for public reception, resonance (or perhaps repudiation) of these texts, a study of newspapers loses its social meaning, and the “public” loses its agency. If structure interacts with agency (or indeed, depends on it!), it is in pursuit of agency that I use three additional types of movable texts: club records, letters and correspondence, and published individual speeches, autobiographies, and interviews.

The Syrian press and ethnic associations of all stripes – mutual aid societies, social welfare groups, literary clubs, and political parties – were the two lungs of every Syrian colony around the world; they breathed life into the community, invigorating a public sense of duty and inspiring social activism and political work. In rare circumstances the internal records of these clubs have been preserved,<sup>76</sup> but in most cases these institutions must be pursued through their ephemera as it circulated the Syrian colonies. As one of the clearest manifestations of a Syrian or Lebanese “public” in the *mahjar*, this dissertation uses the records and ephemera of ethnic clubs as a second body of movable texts. The official records of these societies provide insight into their aims, activism, and internal workings of the *mahjar*’s philanthropic and political organizations. Additional materials like jubilee books and press releases relay the ways that these institutions influenced patterns of sociability while channeling patterns of activism towards certain types of practice.

Letters, correspondence, and individual memoirs comprise the third kind of movable text in this work. Letters between emigrants, among family members and friends, public “letters to the editor,” letters from home, pleas for help and assistance, and official correspondence between

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<sup>76</sup> This has been the case with the Syrian Lebanese Ladies Aid Society of Boston, a group whose entire records were donated to Harvard University’s Schlesinger Library by historian Evelyn Shakir (see Chapter 6).

consular officers, clergymen, and political figures all appear in this thesis. Where possible I have situated these letters as documenting the lives of individuals and the institutions they represent. Published travel memoirs furthermore illustrate the movement of individuals between the Syrian communities abroad, demonstrating the continuing relevance of migration networks between the *mahjar* and the Mashriq. Although I draw distinctions between three types of movable text: periodicals, club ephemera, and individual letters or memoirs, each type mutually bled into the others, revealing the extent to which individual or social agency merged into the structures that emerged across the *mahjar*. An individual like one Hanna Khabbaz simultaneously published newspapers in Homs and New York City,<sup>77</sup> travelled to Syria's colonies in Europe, South America, and the Caribbean,<sup>78</sup> visiting social clubs in each city to deliver speeches and raise relief for Syria.<sup>79</sup> His itinerary was exceptional, touching more places in the Syrian *mahjar* than many of Syria's less prominent political activists, but the everyday circulation of individuals remained a constant and permanent feature of the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar*, owing to the enduring quality of its social institutions.

### *Chapter Outline and Significant Findings*

Using a polyglot and transnational bodies of "movable text," this dissertation argues that Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living in the American *mahjar* influenced the politics of their homeland during and after World War I, creating new patterns of long-distance nationalism that continued into the early French Mandate period. This thesis falls into three broad parts, each guided by its own themes and questions. Part 1 (chapters 1 and 2) introduce the three largest

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<sup>77</sup> He was editor in chief of *Jadat al-Rishad* (Homs), and official correspondent to *al-Sa'ih* (New York) in the early 1920s.

<sup>78</sup> This is merely one part of his extensive itinerary. He published the entire story in *Hawl al-Kura al-'Ardiyya* (New York: Matba'at al-Huda al-Yawmiyya, 1920).

<sup>79</sup> A program of Khabbaz's visit to *al-Nadi al-Homsi* appeared shortly after his visit there. Over 1,000 Syrians from around South America attended the speech (see Chapter 3). Hanna Khabbaz, *Manatiq al-Nufuz wa-Mamlakat al-'Ilm al-Khalida* (São Paulo: Matba'at al-Ra'id, 1922).

Syrian colonies in the *mahjar*, contextualizing the development of transnational institutions between them, and tracing the progression of *mahjari* political activism from the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 through the emergence of Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalisms after 1916. It builds the case for thinking about the *mahjar* as a single unit of analysis, as a structure wherein emigrant activists collaborated, competed, and represented the emigrant public as members of a national community.

Part 2 (chapters 3 and 4) queries the relationship between the French Mandate, its partners and its opponents in the *mahjar* through the 1920s. It argues that as the French established new states in Lebanon and Syria, they sought to embrace, administer, and control the movements of Syrians and Lebanese living abroad through the census, documentary and travel regimes, and through the formalization of a Mandatory consular network. Emigrant activists abroad responded to such overtures in many ways: some collaborated with the Mandate's goals and made new claims on the state as a transnational citizen body, while others evaded the Mandate's attempts to domesticate the diaspora and continued to protest French colonial rule in the Mashriq.

Part 3 (chapters 5 and 6) shifts gears from nationalist activism to political culture in the interwar *mahjar* through a gendered lens. It argues that a bourgeois vision of the "nation as family" predominated over Syrian diasporic nationalisms in the 1920s, and that by extension, the anticolonial nationalist movement demanded a division of activist labor that worked toward the collective goal of nurturing and advancing Syrian patriotic culture abroad for an eventual return to the homeland. Men were expected to develop their bodies and mind through rigorous training and self-improvement as well as to provide philanthropic services for their community. Women, by contrast, were expected to commit their labors to within the domestic space of the homestead,



an expectation that neither matched up with the realities of women textile workers in the *mahjar* nor the emerging values of the international women's movement.

Emerging as a result of a global economic convergence drawing the Mediterranean labor economy to the expanding economies of the Americas, the Syrian "colonies" in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires became the largest settlements of Syrians outside the Middle East by the turn of the twentieth century. Owing to the emergence of transnational commercial, banking, social, and philanthropic institutions, each of these communities transformed into transnational Ottoman suburbs. Chapter 1 provides a brief history of Syrian emigration to the Americas in global perspective as well as a discussion of the three settler societies that Syrian emigrants encountered in the New World. It then compares the Syrian communities on Washington Street, *Rua 25 de Marzo*, and *Avenida Corrientes* to reveal how all three communities developed similar economies, social institutions, and a common public sphere through a shared print culture. Then, moving from comparison to connection, the chapter closes by investigating early manifestations of a shared transnational patriotic culture during the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, an important episode which revealed the extent to which political events "back home" reverberated into and across transnational Syrian space.

If a shared print culture facilitated Syrian emigration to the Americas and transformed the emigrant communities in New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires into Syrian intellectual "capitals" by the nineteenth century's close, it also supported the rise of competing Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalist movements during World War I. Chapter 2 argues that the Syrian press in the *mahjar* oversaw the critical shift from Ottoman constitutionalism to separatist nationalism during the War, transforming the colonies into epicenters for nationalist activism and creating discursive space where emigrants claimed, created, and represented their respective

national communities as alternatives to Ottoman hegemony. Emigrant journalists set out to manage the homeland's transition from empire to nation, using the transnational Syrian press to organize across the *mahjar*. I argue that the ubiquity of the newspaper industry guided the Syrian nationalist *habitus* in two importance ways. First, it led activists into a distinctive politics of petition that depended on the ability to represent and “speak for” the *mahjar* through transnational party activism. Second, the search for partners in this project drove the diaspora's activists (Arab, Syrian, and Lebanese) into to complex political alliances (and just as often, antagonisms) with France as the self-interested guarantor of a post-Ottoman Syrian state. The twists and turns of diasporic nationalist activism culminated at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Through the *mahjar*'s intervention and France's domination of the Conférence, Syria (and Lebanon, created in 1920) did not transition from empire to nation-state. Instead, it was transacted from Empire to Mandate.

With the San Remo Conference in April 1920, the Syrian and Lebanese territories were awarded to France. After displacing Mount Lebanon's Ottoman-era Administrative Council and defeating Emir Faysal's short-lived Arab nationalist Kingdom, French General Henri Gouraud set about establishing his authority over two new entities: “Greater Lebanon” [*Grand Liban* in French] and a federated state of Syria, which emerged after 1920. But in newly-created Lebanon, the new territory's political viability and France's presence there remained hotly contested among both residents and emigrants. Serious disputes over who represented the “Lebanese” as a national community (and on what basis they did so) boiled on as France set to building new legislative structures. As Chapter 3 argues, France's Mandatory authority depended on Gouraud's partnerships with religious leaders in general, and with the Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik in particular. In the confessional Lebanese Republic France set out to build, the Mandate needed to

create an overall Christian majority and preserve the political supremacy of its Maronite constituencies within Lebanese politics. Both objectives, seen as favorable for the continuation of French rule, lead the French High Commissioner to reach out to the *mahjar* as a source of political authority and demographic support. Chapter 3 reveals the Maronite Church's role in conducting the first Lebanese census of 1921. It argues that the French Mandatory State and the Maronite Church labored to integrate Lebanese Maronite emigrants into the Greater Lebanon's national population. By "claiming" Lebanon's Maronite emigrants, both Church and State extended their authority well beyond Lebanon's territorial borders. The emigrants' inclusion in the 1921 census, in turn, paved the way for new patterns of transnational, participatory citizenship to emerge among Lebanese Maronites living abroad. Demands for services and rights fused into a complex pattern of Lebanese substantive citizenship. A new transnational political contract, born of expedience and the successful precedents of the War, emerged between French Lebanon and the Lebanese Maronite diaspora.

If France's authority over Lebanon began with General Gouraud's proclamation of the *Grand Liban* and the census of 1921, Syria's experience with the early French Mandate began with a destructive war against the fledgling state of Hashimite King Faysal in Damascus. Chapter 4 and 5 each deal with Arab nationalist activism and political culture in South America (in Argentina and Brazil, respectively). Chapter 4 follows the political lives of a group of Arab nationalists in Buenos Aires from World War I through the 1920s, situating them in relation the transnational consular networks that linked the city's Syrian Ottoman community to the homeland (first to the post-1908 Ottoman government under the Committee of Union and Progress, and to the French Mandatory government after 1920). It argues that over the course of the 1920s, the leaders of the Arab nationalist movement articulated a progressively more radical

and anticolonial form of pan-Arab nationalism which, rather than appealing to the League of Nations and seeking dialogue over Syria's political future, increasingly saw the international forum as the handmaiden of foreign colonialism and armed revolt the only means of Syria's liberation. In the bilingual Syrian press (Spanish and Arabic), activists like Amin Arslan, Jurj Sawaya, and Jurj 'Assaf drew analogies between Syria's independence movement and the history of Argentinian liberation from Spanish rule. As French authorities in the Mandate's Buenos Aires consulate tried to curb continuing Syrian immigration into Argentina and to counter Arab nationalist propaganda, these men criticized the French Mandate, and after 1928, the moderate nationalists of the Syrian National Bloc [*al-Kutla al-Wataniyya*] as illegitimate representatives of the Syrian people.

After defeating Faysal and conquering Syria by force in 1920, France sought to cut ties between the anticolonial Syrian nationalist movement and its emigrant supporters. But instead of fading into obscurity, Syrian emigrant activists pursued their own long-distance nationalist culture in opposition to the French Mandate. Chapter 5 introduces *Al-Nadi al-Homsi*, one of the *mahjar*'s most prominent political clubs at the center of a diasporic Syrian nationalism during the early 1920s. It argues that in the wake of the movement's defeat at the Battle of Maysalun, Syrian emigrant nationalists in São Paulo developed a vision for Syrian cultural development that drew analogies between patriotic masculinity, liberation, and future national sovereignty. *Al-Nadi al-Homsi* was an organization focused on transforming Syrian boys from São Paulo into men and ideal citizens in preparation for an eventual "return" to Syria to liberate it from French occupation. The club undertook philanthropic work, building Syrian orphanages in São Paulo and Homs, funding educational institutions, and it housed a fraternity devoted to cultivating young Syrian men's mind and bodies. The poetry readings, speeches, and charitable events given

at *Al-Nadi al-Homsi* operated around the logic that through collective intellectual pursuit and corporeal discipline, the Syrian nationalist movement could remake a Syrian masculinity rooted in strength and respectability as the first step towards Syria's national liberation.

Meanwhile, in New York new tensions emerged between a men's culture of paternalistic nationalism and a developing Syrian feminism that nurtured ties to the international women's movement. Chapter 6 lays out the development of Syrian and Lebanese feminism in New York City during the 1920s, arguing that as the decade wore on Syrian emigrant women increasingly called to question the patriarchal structures of the nationalist movement and sought out (and found) internationalist alternatives. Springing from a "polite" form of social activism that focused on the advancement of Syrian women through education and private philanthropy (mirroring the trends analyzed in chapter 5), Syrian and Lebanese female activists soon pushed the boundaries of their assigned places within a nationalist respectability in favor of a feminist ideal informed by the American women's movement. Syrian feminism took on new forms in the 1920s: debates over women's place in public politics, publishing, and wage labor; discussions about marriage, motherhood, and divorce; and a generational struggle between an older feminism that made the home a site of activism, and a new feminism conversant with internationalist politics and concerned with women's place in the public sphere. I argue that cooperation between Syrian-Lebanese women's groups and the American institutions for wartime relief (from the Red Cross and Near East Relief to the New York Settlements Project and the Denison House) influenced the emergence of a new Syrian feminism, critical of the paternalistic nature of the Syrian nationalist movement and in favor of internationalist activist goals based on middle-class notions of civilization, modernity, and gender equality.

This dissertation begins with the question "what makes a national community?" and that

is also where it ends. I argue in turns that the national community that emerged between the Wars in the Syrian and Lebanese *mahjar* depended on a transnational political infrastructure that cast all of the colonies into shared webs of social responsibility, activism, and political imagination. Journalists, community organizers, clergymen, and even the emerging Syrian and Lebanese states depended on these networks that linked New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires to the Mashriq, and in turn, these networks helped generate new ideas about who participated in building a nation, how they did so, and who belonged as a citizen. Using moveable texts and transnational theories of community, my findings demonstrate the construction of a transnational political community spanning across the interwar American *mahjar*.

But at the same time, an ethnographer visiting the *mahjar* might come to a very different set of conclusions: if this was a national community in formation, it was simultaneously a community deeply divided over questions of national identity. Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalists in the *mahjar* may have proclaimed their unending support for national movements “at home,” but they also quarreled with their emigrant neighbors over confessional loyalties, Church politics, or identification with competing political narratives. If the *mahjar* developed structures that channeled emigrant politics into a shared discursive space and political praxis, the ideological content and loyalties of its activists remained very much at odds. That is to say, “shared discursive formations” can refer as much to a jovial, spirited debate as to an antagonistic screaming match; “shared praxis” often meant that nationalists vied ruthlessly with one another for signatures on petitions that, while ideologically opposed, looked very similar in form. In the spirit of recognizing unities and divisions, this dissertation concludes with a discussion of the problems historians of the *mahjar* encounter when working through the lens of community.

## CHAPTER 1: MASHRIQ IN THE MAHJAR: READING SYRIA'S 'COLONIZATION' OF THE AMERICAS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT, 1880-1912

The third quarter of the nineteenth century was a moment of global economic convergence, advancing technologies of travel and communication, and intense mass labor migration. The integration of a colonial world economy centered on the movement of raw materials and proletarian labor from economic “peripheries” into the manufacturing core centers of Western Europe and the Americas began as early as the seventeenth century, but the brief four-decade period between 1880 and 1914 saw new patterns of temporary labor migration on a truly massive scale.<sup>80</sup> Owing in part to advancements in steam technology and improvements in passenger transport, and in part to the disintegration of local peasant economies before the demands of a hungry and expanding Western European capitalist economy, the emigration “industry” and each of its aspects – steamship shipping, money-lending, employment agencies, immigrant social welfare and boarding houses, etc. – swiftly became profitable business enterprises in various parts of the world simultaneously, including Ottoman Syria, Italy, Ireland, Eastern Europe, and China (among others). The first Syrians who emigrated to the Americas often found work in assisting their compatriots into their new land of adoption; after Najib Arbeely arrived in New York City with his father, Yusuf, at fourteen years old in 1878, he learned English and took a job as an interpreter at Ellis Island, even sponsoring new arrivals where he saw fit. In 1894, he founded the first Arabic newspaper in the United States, *Kawkab Amrika*,

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<sup>80</sup> Adam McKeown calls this period of increased international labor migration a “first-wave globalization” preceding its late twentieth century counterpart. Adam McKeown “Global Migration, 1846-1940,” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 2 (2004), 155-189; although modern transportation technologies allowed for a grander scale than ever before in the nineteenth century, other historians have pointed out similar world economic convergences, for instance in sixteenth century Europe or the thirteenth century Indian Ocean. See Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1750* (Bloomington; University of Indiana Press, 1992) and Janet Abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

which published alongside the day's events information about employment, American customs, and other information relevant to new arrivals.<sup>81</sup>

Early arrivals such as Arbeely family, historians of migration note, help explain how Syrian "colonies" emerged within the urban spaces of the Atlantic ports of entry: Syrians joined Italians, Eastern Europeans, and other Mediterranean communities in a pastiche of urban enclaves which emerged in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires between 1880 and 1914.<sup>82</sup> By the starting point for this dissertation (1913), the Syrian colonies were already large enough to be noticed, marveled at, and sometimes resented by mainstream American observers. But although seemingly insular to the outside observer, these communities operated in a transnational space that joined the Syrian and Lebanese homeland to each host society and its Syrian inhabitants; networks of commerce, philanthropy, print culture, and political activism served as the ties which bound them together. This dissertation is concerned with the emergence not of the Syrian colonies themselves, but with their transformation into important epicenters for Syrian and Lebanese nationalist activism and political culture after 1914. However, important questions must be addressed before coming to the sea-changes of World War I: why did Syrians emigrate, and why did they arrive in the Americas? How did the immigrant *entrepôts* in three Atlantic port cities – New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires – become *de facto* Syrian colonies, what made them "colonial"? And perhaps most significantly, when did the *mahjar*'s three largest communities become significant places for homeland activism? How and why did

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<sup>81</sup> Henry Melki, *al-Sihafa al-‘Arabiyya fi al-Mahjar: wa-‘Alaqtuha bi-l-Adab al-Mahjari* (Beirut: Dar al-Sharq al-Awsat li-l-Tiba‘ wa-l-Nashr, 1998), 30.

<sup>82</sup> On Italians, see Donna Gabaccia and Franco Iacovetta, eds. *Women, Gender, and Transnational lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); on Mediterranean Jews in New York, see Devin Naar, "From the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans' to the 'Goldene Medina': Jewish Immigration from Salonika to the United States," in *American Jewish History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 435-473. At the same time, Chinese emigrant colonies emerged in Pacific port zones, most notably San Francisco, California, and Lima, Peru; see Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change, Perus, Chicago, and Hawai'i, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 136-40.



this happen on the eve of World War I?

This chapter accomplishes three preliminary goals. First, it frames Syria's mass emigration within the broader historical experience of late nineteenth century economic globalization and the mass labor migration that accompanied it. Global processes linked the Mediterranean world economy to the economic powerhouses emerging in the post-Abolition Atlantic: the proletarianization of skilled labor, the introduction of steamship passenger traffic, and the development of transnational circuits of credit, commerce, and capital drew Syrians, Greeks, Italians, and Sephardic Jews across oceans to participate in a "colonization" of port cities in the new World. Second, this chapter lays out a brief history of the three largest Syrian "colonies" in the Americas before World War I: Washington Street's "Little Syria" in New York City, *Rua 25 de Marzo* in São Paulo, Brazil, and *Avenida Corrientes* in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I build the case for comparing these three colonies through an examination of their social, intellectual, and political institutions, and I argue that through these institutions a shared, transnational political culture emerged on the eve of World War I. Finally, the chapter closes with an exploration of how the Ottoman Empire's 1908 Young Turk Revolution played out between the three Syrian colonies, demonstrating that the political connectivities I pursue in this thesis had significant Ottoman precursors, and also foreshadowing the development of a political praxis that was "transnational" before it became "long-distance nationalist" during World War I.

#### *Syrian Emigration in Global Context*

Syrians and Lebanese began to leave the coastal Levant as early as the mid-eighteenth century. Between the 1750s and the 1880s, the first, rather small emigration wave from Ottoman Syrian comprised mostly of Syrian urban elites, headed for the Egyptian cities of Cairo and Alexandria for work in commerce and the professions. These émigré elites, numbering about 4,000 according to Thomas Philipp, came from the wealthiest Greek Catholic households in

Aleppo and Damascus; once in Egypt their patterns of settlement set them apart from native Egyptians, as elites merchants connected to French commerce and as foreign émigrés.<sup>83</sup> Although this elite wave of emigration was not a mass migration nor did later emigrants leaving Syria resemble its elite character, the Syrian community that emerged in Cairo by the mid-eighteenth century established important precedents for the emigrant settlements that appeared later in the Americas. The Syrians in Egypt developed the earliest Arabic language periodicals, for instance, and within them this community nurtured a vibrant literary culture that borrowed late nineteenth century notions about civilizations East and West, social progress through public education, and political reform through tactful borrowing and Western political theory. And as Syrians settled in larger numbers in the Americas, their own periodicals entered into conversation with their counterparts in Cairo, for instance, in Na‘um Labaki’s *al-Afkar* in Brazil.<sup>84</sup> These ideas, and an array of related notions about Islamic legal reform, literary renewal, and the emergence of an authentic Arab liberalism are known as *al-nahda* [renaissance].<sup>85</sup> In many ways, Syrian emigrants leaving for the Americas emulated Syrian Cairo as the model for an illustrious and civilized diasporic lifestyle. Indeed, many of the first Syrians to arrive in America had spent months or years in Cairo along the way, and at the same time, Syrian emigrants continued to arrive in Egypt even as the colonies of New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires grew to numbers over and above their Cairene compatriots. Although this thesis focuses on Syrian and Lebanese communities across the Americas post-1900, it must be remembered that Egypt was (and remained) the beating heart of the early Syrian *mahjar*. That Syrian American communities had

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<sup>83</sup>Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians of Egypt, 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Berliner Islamstudien Bd, 1985), 11-2.

<sup>84</sup> Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 35-9.

<sup>85</sup> On the *nahda*, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Marwan Buheiry, ed. *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890-1919* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981).

historical ties to older networks of Syrian émigrés in Egypt was a given, but more than that, the Egyptian “mother colony” continually conditioned successive waves of emigration, conditioning the intellectual and political cultures which emerged farther abroad.<sup>86</sup>

The Syrian emigration that produced the colonies in New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires constituted a “second wave,” running from around 1880 to the beginning of World War I in 1914.<sup>87</sup> The migrants and their children born in the *mahjar* (the “second-generation”) are the subjects in this study; these migrants were youthful, the first of them being unmarried or recently-married men and male relatives, they were typically of the middling peasant classes from Syria’s smaller towns or from rugged Mount Lebanon.<sup>88</sup> Many of these migrants were recent additions to a budding educated bourgeoisie, frequently educated in the French, American, or Russian missionary schools which dotted the Syrian landscape over the courses of the nineteenth century’s second half. Those young men most likely to emigrate were part of a generation of rising expectations and a discordant contraction of economic opportunity: a rising population, booming urbanization, increasing literacy, and improved access to higher education, on one hand, and mounting land hunger and debt, a global crash in the silk market (the premier cash crop of coastal Syria) in the 1870s, and a dismal employment outlook in the urban professions at home, on the other.<sup>89</sup> Economic decisions in both Mount Lebanon and the rest of

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<sup>86</sup> Alixa Naff refers to New York City as the Syrian “mother colony” as the hub for Syrian American thought and society in the United States. The New York colony fed other, smaller colonies of Syrians via employment networks and social work: Utica and Buffalo, New York, and Boston, Fall River, Worcester, and Lowell, Massachusetts. In the grander scheme of the entire Syrian diaspora, however, the Syrian settlement in Cairo is the clearest waypoint for early Syrian emigrants to the Americas. I borrow her term to express a common experience of migration to and through the core colony; Alixa Naff, “New York: The Mother Colony,” in *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, Philip Kayal and Kathleen Benson, eds (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 7-10.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Phillipp notes that Cairo and Alexandria both experienced a second wave of Syrian immigration during the same period, *The Syrians in Egypt*, 58-62.

<sup>88</sup> Akram Khater concludes that “most emigrants from the Mountain were poor, but not destitute” peasants, driven by land hunger as well as mounting expectations for economic and social advancement; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 56.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Owen, “The Provinces of Greater Syria, 1850-1880,” *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 1981), 158-161.

coastal Syria were made at the household level; families sought upwards mobility through the selective out-migration of young men, a pattern Leslie Page Moch has identified as the transnationalization of the cottage economic model. As flexible economic units, families could deploy male and female labor in a complementary manner, but the system depended on both.<sup>90</sup> Akram Khater notes that in Syria, young women entered into wage work in the spinning and reeling of silk as a means of bolstering men's labor (and honor) in a peasant agricultural system or through mercantile emigration.<sup>91</sup> By joining male labor emigration with female industrial work, for a time this transnational family papered over some of the dislocations attendant to the region's entrance into the global world economy. Once in the Americas, Syrian men depended on a budding system of credit-making and employment agents to find quick work in petty retail, particularly in the peddling of textiles (both silk and cotton) and dry goods (coffee, sewing notions, groceries, etc).<sup>92</sup> The family economy of late nineteenth century Syria retained aspects of both peasant and proletarian economies, through a gendered division of labor, peasants became workers engaged already in a complex transnational economic system.

Selective emigration as part of a nineteenth century family economy was not only a Syrian, or even Mediterranean, phenomenon, and similar patterns of migration emerged simultaneously in Italy, China, Japan, and within Europe, in response to the same global economic pressures. And the scale of these global migrations was truly immense: between the mid- and late-nineteenth century, for instance, an estimated 50 to 55 million Europeans – 20

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<sup>90</sup> Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1750* (Bloomington; University of Indiana Press, 1992), 69; see also Leslie Page Moch, "Connecting Migration and World History, Demographic Patterns, Family Systems and Gender," in *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007), 102-4. On Syrian female emigration, see Sara Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004) 71-4.

<sup>91</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, "'House' to 'Goddess of the House': Gender, Class, and Silk in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mount Lebanon," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 3 (1996), 329-31.

<sup>92</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 128-35.

percent of Europe's entire population – participated in the Atlantic migration circuit.<sup>93</sup> Between 1870 and 1914, some 14 million Italians emigrated, constituting around 39 percent of the peninsula's total pre-World War I population.<sup>94</sup> In this light, the concurrent departure of between 18 and 25 percent of *bilad al-sham*'s total population looks typical of broader trends on the trans-Atlantic circuit.<sup>95</sup> Like European migrants, Syrians typically (but not exclusively) headed for developing countries in the Atlantic.<sup>96</sup> Like other Mediterranean migrants (especially the Italians), Syrians were more likely to settle in port cities and to engage in either small-scale commerce or industrial textile work.<sup>97</sup>

By the beginning of World War I, cash remittances and investments made by Syrian emigrants came to constitute the central pillar of Syria's homeland economy. The rudimentary character of the *mahjar*'s early banking industry and the common practice of clandestine cash remittances makes tracing their impact on Syria a difficult undertaking, but Charles Issawi clearly demonstrates the accelerating tilt of the economy towards emigrant remittances even through an incomplete body of data. He finds that by 1900, Mount Lebanon received around 200,000 British Pounds in remittances from the Americas; by 1910, this number appreciated to

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<sup>93</sup>Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 331-2.

<sup>94</sup> Donna Gabaccia and Fraser Ottanelli, eds, *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>95</sup>Moch, *Moving Europeans*, 147; Charles Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," in Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds., *Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration* (London: I.B. Taurus and Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 31

<sup>96</sup> Smaller flows of Syrian emigrants continued to head to Egypt, and to West Africa after 1900. Communities of Syrians also emerged in western Europe, particularly in London, Paris, and Marseilles. See Xerxes Malki, "Productive Aliens: Economic Planning and the Lebanese in Ghana, 1930-1972," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 1 (2013), 85-114; Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: the Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Fred Halliday, "The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and the Cotton Trade," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 2 (1992), 159-170.

<sup>97</sup> Samuel Baily concludes that before 1914, one third of all Italian immigrants in Argentina lived in Buenos Aires (totaling 312,000), and one quarter of all Italians in the United States concentrated in New York City (toalling 370,000), *Immigrants in the Land of Promise: Italians of Buenos Aires and New York City*, 9-10. Angelo Trento finds the tendency intensified in Brazil, where 71 percent of Italian immigrants settled in São Paulo prior 1905, "'Wherever We Work, That Land is Ours:' The Italian Anarchist Press and Working-Class Solidarity in São Paulo," in *Italian Workers of the World*, 103.

800,000, reflecting both the growing numbers of emigrants and their commercial success abroad.<sup>98</sup> By 1917, emigrant remittances constituted Mount Lebanon's single largest economic resource, comprising 220 million Ottoman piastres per annum compared to the silk trade's 60 million, agriculture's 30 million, and industry's 10 million piastres.<sup>99</sup> World War I, of course, accounts for a sharp decline in agricultural returns, and much of the 220 million that Issawi reports comes in the form of wartime relief. But nevertheless, these numbers throw into stark relief the level of economic influence the *mahjar* came to possess; remittances presented a significant portion of Syria's economy during times of stability, and in periods of want and catastrophe, they provided an essential economic lifeline.

The remittance economy influenced patterns of consumption within the Syrian and Lebanese family, bearing dramatic consequences for the shape of the family especially in terms of socioeconomic class and internal gender norms. As Akram Khater demonstrates, those families that had several sons in the *mahjar* came to form a new upwardly mobile middle class; as they expanded their homes into red-tiled villas across coastal Lebanon, the families of emigrants set themselves apart by their affluent spending patterns, preference for the nuclear family unit, and their focus on developing Lebanese schools, charities, businesses, and public infrastructure.<sup>100</sup> The growing affluence of the homeland as a result of emigrant remittances (and of returning emigrants themselves-- some 45 percent of Mountain Lebanese who left before 1920 later returned to the Mountain during the interwar period)<sup>101</sup> altered the landscape and the culture

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<sup>98</sup>Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," in *Lebanese in the World*, 26-7

<sup>99</sup>A.A. Naccache, Inspector of Public Works and Agriculture, in A. Ruppin, *Syrien als Wirtschaftsgebiet* (Berlin 1917), as cited by Charles Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," in *Lebanese in the World*, 27.

<sup>100</sup> Akram Fouad Khater *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 118-27.

<sup>101</sup>Khater, *Inventing Home*, 110; Kohei Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939: Towards a Study," in *The Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration*, eds. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: I.B. Taurus, 1992), 87.

of the homeland.

Although economic factors presented the most important causes of Syrian emigration during the period, political and social factors also played a role. First, Syrian and Lebanese Christians, particularly Maronites, Melkites (Greek Catholics), Syrian and Greek Orthodox, and Syrian Protestants emigrated in larger numbers than Sunnis, Shi'is, Druze, Alawis, or Armenian Christians (although all of these groups did engage in selective sojourning).<sup>102</sup> Many historians conclude that the arrival of foreign missionaries in Syria and their role in advancing Syria's educational system opened the gates of emigration for young pupils enrolled in these schools.<sup>103</sup> As the Orthodox and Maronite Churches competed with Russian, American, and French missionary groups, new schools cropped up across the Levant and competed with one another for enrollments.<sup>104</sup> Many of the earliest Syrian emigrants were educated in missionary secondary schools and colleges, especially the French Jesuit Université Saint Joseph (USJ) and the American Presbyterian Syrian Protestant College (SPC, later renamed the American University of Beirut, AUB). Alumni from these institutions often formed informal networks of assistance for their colleagues seeking to move abroad, providing employment and occasionally influencing where new emigrants decided to settle. After graduating from USJ, for instance, Lebanese

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<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the true ratios between these groups can be estimated only at great hazard, due in no smaller part to the problems and pitfalls of the 1921 Lebanese Mandate's census, which remains the most commonly cited statistical source for reporting population data in the Lebanese diaspora. For a thorough summary of the data reported in this census, see Kohei Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939," *Lebanese in the World*, 66. The caveat remains, though, that Hashimoto's data (the census itself) was likely inaccurate on its reporting on non-Christian Lebanese emigrants. As it is, only anecdotal evidence (and not hard statistics) points to the demographic weight of non-Christian Syrian and Lebanese groups. It remains that Christians (particularly Maronites and Greek Orthodox) numerically dominated the American *mahjar*. What is less clear is by what ratio they did so. See Chapter 3 for details the 1921 census and related issues.

<sup>103</sup> Philip M. Kayal and Joseph Kayal, *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: a Study in Religion and Assimilation* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 197), 107-8; Michael Suleiman, "Impressions of New York City by Early Arab Immigrants," in *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, ed. Kathleen Benson and Philip Kayal (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 2002), 43, 46; Alixa Naff, *Becoming American*, 36-7;

<sup>104</sup> Isa As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, vol. 2 (Homs: Mutraniyyat Homs al-Urthudoxiyya, 1983), 386; Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: the Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (New York: Perseus Books, 2010), 51-3.

publisher Na'um Mukarzil (a man whose story laces throughout the following chapters) arrived in Cairo in 1897 to work at a Jesuit school, and then in New York to attend a Jesuit medical school,<sup>105</sup> while Dr. Khalil Sa'adeh would travel through Cairo, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo between 1892 and 1925 working entirely through SPC alumni networks.<sup>106</sup>

Second, within the Syrian and Lebanese emigrant communities abroad, narratives of political repression or religious persecution developed after World War I, drawing the interest of historians who have in turns called the “persecution theory” a pervasive diasporic myth or an observable reality. It is clear that Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s strict checks on the press, on free expression, and his regime’s surveillance of intellectuals and constitutionalist reformers proved too stifling for Syrian elites and professionals, many of whom could afford to leave the Empire for political reasons. Indeed, the development and vitality of the first Syrian newspapers in Cairo was due in part to the Sultan’s repressive censorship policies; under British occupation after 1882, Cairo was not a pleasant place to be Egyptian but the lot of the Syrian émigrés improved notably, and many worked for British administrators.<sup>107</sup> That said, there developed at some point long after the fact a narrative about Syrian flight from the Mashriq centered on endemic political and especially religious persecution.<sup>108</sup> More recent analyses of the persecution narrative have

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<sup>105</sup> Mary Mukarzil, *Al-Hoda 1898-1968: The Story of Lebanon and its Emigrants as Taken from the Newspaper al-Hoda* (New York: al-Hoda Press, 1968), 1-5.

<sup>106</sup> Hamiya, *al-‘Allama wa-al-Duktur Khalil Sa’adih*, 170.

<sup>107</sup> Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 46-7.

<sup>108</sup> Historians have also adopted emigrant narratives about persecution as explanatories for Syrian emigration and the religious composition of the *mahjar*. Using census data, for instance, Alixa Naff concluded that Christians comprised over 90 percent of the Syrian diaspora in the United States, and that persecution may have played a role in explaining Christian emigration. As this dissertation’s Chapter 3 will argue, raw census data like that employed by Naff obscured the number of Muslims living abroad. Similarly, Akram Khater argues that persecution narratives served the cause of Syrian inclusion within an American context and were commonly developed by migrants themselves in framing the immigrant community for a sympathetic reception; see Naff, *Becoming American*, 7; Akram Khater, “The Persecution Theory,” *Inventing Home*, 49-52. Kemal Karpas estimates that Ottoman Muslims comprised around 20 percent of the diaspora in the Americas, Kemal Karpas, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 2 (1985), 182-3.



revealed such narratives to be partly a construction of a diasporic self-image.<sup>109</sup> Older histories that frame emigration from Mount Lebanon as a consequence of the violence of 1860, for instance, do not closely consider that mass emigration began in the late 1870s and continued through the 1910s, a time the local political and religious climate became comparatively comfortable. The “long peace” of the Lebanese *mutasarrifiyya* period (1861 to 1915) does not resemble the descriptions of out-and-out religious persecution of religious minorities as a cause of emigration.<sup>110</sup> Instead, it appears that discussions about persecution arose out of an early twentieth century debate over changes to Ottoman conscription laws which required military service of all Ottoman subjects, irrespective of millet (non-Muslims had until then been excluded from military service).<sup>111</sup> Dodging military conscription presented one motivation for young Syrian and Lebanese men emigrating abroad, certainly,<sup>112</sup> but the conflation of this story with a larger theme of “religious persecution” should be looked at as a relic of late Ottoman political discourse, not as an explanatory force promoting the mass emigration of Syrians.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Oswaldo Mário Serra Truzzi, *Patrícios: Sírios e Libaneses em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 1997), 23.

<sup>110</sup> The *Mutasarrifiyya* administration liberalized policies with regards to travel and emigrant commerce in ways very much at odds with the narrative of “persecution:” decreeing in 1866 that emigrants could still count as “residents” of Mount Lebanon as long as they continued to pay property taxes, liberal issuance of Ottoman travel permits that served as informal passports for emigrating Lebanese, and deregulating the maritime passenger trade moving through the port of Beirut in the 1890s. Even instances where the *mutasarrif* placed restrictions on emigration, for instance in cracking down in clandestine emigration and illegal smuggling in the 1880s and 1890s, Engin Akarli argues that the Ottoman government was less concerned with limiting Ottoman mobility than with saving itself from the “embarrassment” of an unseemly smuggling trade going on within its territory; Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 61-3.

<sup>111</sup> The millet system refers to an Ottoman practice of categorizing its subjects by confessional groupings. It had its origins in the Islamic classification of protected *dhimmi* groups, non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. Central to the idea of the millets is that non-Muslim subjects received certain protections within and exemptions from the Islamic state, including military exemption. The CUP’s new draft law favor total legal equalities for Ottoman subjects without regard to confessional category; the change was opposed by many Christians because it made them subject to the draft, but it was also opposed by many Muslims because it was seen as a further concession to Christian subjects, who were already widely seen as beneficiaries to certain capitulations to European powers. See Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 39-40, 88-9.

<sup>112</sup> Ignacio Klich, “Criollos and Arabic speakers in Argentina: an Uneasy Pas de Deux, 1988-1914,” *Lebanese in the World*, 247.

<sup>113</sup> Hasan Kayali demonstrates this convincingly with regards to discussions about “Turkification” in the Arabic press, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley:

By 1914, an estimated 1 in 4 Lebanese and 1 in 6 Syrians had left for the *mahjar*, whether on the temporary or permanent basis. In some villages, as many as half of the able-bodied workforce had gone abroad, leading to the feminization of many of Mount Lebanon's smaller agricultural settlements.<sup>114</sup> The move out followed two broad patterns which determined the *mahjar*'s shape and its patterns of settlement: step migration and chain migration. Step migration described the process by which migrants moved through multifaceted circuits of migration, checking in at several waypoints along the way. The primary nodes in this circuit were port cities linked by French and Syrian shipping companies: Beirut, Alexandria, Marseilles, New York, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, etc. But would-be emigrants did not simply move from one point to another in this system; rather, the more typical sojourn began with an extended stay in Beirut, followed by a stop in one or more port cities abroad that could last weeks, months, or even years.<sup>115</sup> Before Nami Jafet arrived in São Paulo, Brazil to become one of the *mahjar*'s most important textile moguls (see section below, "*A Colonia*") he accompanied his brother, Antonius, and a small group of his co-villagers in a passage from Beirut to Alexandria and then to Naples, Italy. Three weeks later, his group boarded a steamship headed for Spain, stopping in Barcelona, and on to Rio de Janeiro (a trip, Antonius Jafet recalled in his memoirs, took some three weeks on the open ocean). He arrived in Brazil in September 1903, and made haste for São Paulo to build an empire in cotton.<sup>116</sup> Sometimes these stops lasted not days or weeks, but years: Dr. Khalil Sa'adih, for instance, spent 21 years in Cairo (1892-1913), followed by 6 in Buenos Aires

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University of California Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>114</sup> Charles Issawi, "The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914," in *Lebanese in the World*, 31.

<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Leila Fawaz illustrates that between 1860 and the 1890s, Damascenes migrated to Beirut in numbers large enough to alter the city's confessional demographics. Older migration "steps," even generational ones, were significant because they joined internal migration systems to international ones, influencing patterns of commerce in the meantime; Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 1983), 58-60.

<sup>116</sup> Antonius Jafet, *Dhikrayyat: Nisf Qarn 1903-1953* (São Paulo: Dar al-Tib'a wa-l-Nashr al-'Arabiyya, 1957), 10-1.

(1914-1920), and then 14 more in São Paulo (1920-1934).<sup>117</sup>

Similarly, Syrians who arrived in the major port cities of the Americas-- in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, or New York City-- would find themselves among thriving Syrian colonies already established there. But these “mother colonies” were not typically a migrant’s final destination or endpoints unto themselves; many Syrians tarried there for a time, another waypoint along the way, meeting with employment agents who descended upon New York from the textile firms of Massachusetts, from the pack-peddling businesses that drew Syrians progressively towards Ohio, Pennsylvania, or the Midwest, or to Michigan’s auto plants.<sup>118</sup> Some of these firms were run by Syrians and Lebanese businessmen themselves: in São Paulo, Nami Jafet contracted Syrian and Lebanese workers arriving in Brazil to work in his Ypiranga factory.<sup>119</sup> Networks of employment nearly always began at the ports of entry but often drew itinerant Syrian and Lebanese workers towards the interior, especially in the peddling trade, celebrated in the history of this diaspora.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, however, as the three largest colonies in the Americas, New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires remained critical nodes in this emerging system as commercial and intellectual “capitals” in the Syrian *mahjar*. Step-by-step, nearly all Syrian and Lebanese

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<sup>117</sup> Sa‘adih arrived in Buenos Aires in 1914 after being denied entry into the United States, furthermore. His plan was to spend a few weeks in Argentina gathering the documentation needed to enter the U.S. legally, a plan it appears he abandoned as he built his life in Buenos Aires. ‘Ali Hamiya, *al-‘Allama wa-l-Duktur Khalil Sa‘adeh: Siratuhu wa-a‘maluh, 1857-1934* (Beirut: al-Furat li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi‘, 2007), 12-3.

<sup>118</sup> Sarah Gualtieri shows that in 1916, Ford Motor Company employed 555 Syrian men in their Michigan plant; in time, Henry Ford’s promise of a “five dollars a day” wage made Dearborn draw so many workers that the city became the second largest settlement of Syrians in the U.S. by 1920; Gualtieri, *Between arab and White*, 48-50; Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 119-20, 139-41.

<sup>119</sup> Antonius Jafet, *Dhikrayyat*, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 128-33; John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Newliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 12. Drawing from extensive participant interviews, Evelyn Shakir argues that by World War I, peddling culture was already in decline; the peddling mythology that persisted was a *mahjari* pioneer narrative; *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westview, CT: Praeger, 1997), 38.

migrants to the Americas laid their feet in one of these three communities.<sup>121</sup>

The second pattern that determined the shape of Syrian communities in the Americas was chain migration. Chain migration describes the tendency for migrants to move along migration circuits guided by the advice or itineraries of friends, family, or fellow villagers and governed by networks of social capital and trust.<sup>122</sup> Trustworthy leads on employment or the ability to seek sponsorship from an older male relative helped determine where a would-be Syrian migrant would land in the Americas; such contacts also determined the route he took, what kind of work he undertook, and very often the level of success he could expect while abroad. Promises of ready employment, credit, or simply information about opportunities abroad enticed new emigration, but also created a system whereby towns and villages with the densest connections to the *mahjar* saw higher levels of emigration as well as denser patterns of resettlement.

Annual emigration of Syrians and Lebanese waxed and waned between the 1880s and 1920s, with the clearest peak being the years immediately preceding World War I. Elie Safa estimates that in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, 120,000 Lebanese left the Mountain prior 1900.<sup>123</sup> Kemal Karpat shows that between 1900 and 1914, another estimated 225,000 left *bilad al-sham*.<sup>124</sup> The problems that undermine such rough estimates aside, the trend towards increasing emigration after the year 1900 is clear, despite that the Ottoman government

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<sup>121</sup> Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis," 69.

<sup>122</sup> Trust networks are particularly significant in determining the routes and types of employment decisions that transnational labor migrant; they also, Charles Tilly argues, determine the flow of remittances that flow backwards along them towards the emigrants' point of origin, Charles Tilly, "Trust Networks in Transnational Migration," in *Sociological Forum* 22, no. 1 (2003), 3-5. Sarah Gualtieri, on the other hand, critiques the assumption frequently made by theorists that chain migrations began with male "pioneers" who were later followed by female migrants. Her work demonstrates that all-female chains of migration coexisted alongside other patterns, Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis," 67-8.

<sup>123</sup> Elie Safa, *L'émigration libanaise* (Doctoral Dissertation, Université Saint Joseph, Beirut, 1960), 188-91.

<sup>124</sup> Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America," 183-4; Issawi, "The Historical Background to Lebanese Emigration," *Lebanese in the World*, 31.

sought to check the continuing outflow of Syrian and Lebanese Arabs after the 1890s.<sup>125</sup> By the years immediately preceding the War, around 15,000 to 20,000 Syrians were emigrating annually, a flow stemmed immediately by the wartime blockade of the eastern Mediterranean, but which resumed after 1920.<sup>126</sup>

By the 1920s, Syrian and Lebanese communities in the Americas assumed the diaspora's new center of gravity. A look at the numbers demonstrates the shifting quantitative weight of the communities in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. By the mid-1920s, the Syrian communities in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina constituted 50.7 percent of the entire Syrian diaspora. Of the 688,917 Lebanese emigrants recorded before 1926, the United States had received 29 percent, or around 200,000. The U.S. was the largest receiving country prior World War I. For its part Brazil counted a total of around 177,000, or 25.7 percent, and Argentina boasted 110,000, or 16 percent of the Syrian diaspora. Mass immigration of Syrians had not been recorded in the U.S., Argentina, or Brazil before 1880. But after 1880, Syrians arrived in all three countries in such large numbers that they each outpaced the older Syrian community in Egypt, which never grew larger than 120,000 (or 17.4 percent).<sup>127</sup> These numbers demonstrate several things. First, although Syrian emigration to Egypt continued through the entire nineteenth century, these numbers reveal a slowing of that migration and the preference for American destinations, especially the United States. They also demonstrate the strength of the colonies in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States in particular, especially when the demographic strength of other destinations is compared. Mexico, for example, had roughly 20,000 Syrian immigrants,

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<sup>125</sup>Engin Denis Akarlı, "Ottoman Attitudes Towards Lebanese Emigration, 1885-1910," in *Lebanese in the World*, 109-10.

<sup>126</sup>Issawi, "The Historical Background to Lebanese Emigration," *Lebanese in the World*, 31.

<sup>127</sup>Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939," *Lebanese in the World*, 107.

or 2.9 percent; Cuba, another well-known colony, was only 16,000 strong, or 2.3 percent.<sup>128</sup>

### *Comparing and Connecting the Syrian Colonies of the Americas*

Where the Mediterranean experience of the nineteenth century's economic convergence was one of mass labor migration, the Atlantic economies in North and South America experienced these shifts as rapid, exponential expansions in agricultural output, industrial development, and a booming export-driven economy. Nowhere did these economic boons hold truer than in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, and none were more changed over the course of the nineteenth century. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, all three countries were large, underpopulated, with only tenuous territorial claims to the lands purportedly under their domains. All three saw civil wars and conflicts due to competing claims to economic expansion, and all three countries had themselves emerged from colonial pasts. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, all three countries used foreign immigration as a means of domesticating new lands, increasing cultivation, building industrial infrastructure (especially railroads), and critically, developing its labor force after the global abolition of slavery. And by any of measure, the economic growth experienced simultaneously by the United States, Brazil, and Argentina was exponential. Between 1870 and 1914, the United States doubled its population and acres under cultivation, tripled its imports, quadrupled its exports, built a coast-to-coast rail, and increased its foreign investments by a factor of five.<sup>129</sup> Although tempered slightly by an 1889 military coup and the birth of a Republic, Brazil's railroad industry grew thirty-fold, and its agricultural exports (particularly coffee) grew steadily enough to support a doubling in

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<sup>128</sup> Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939," *Lebanese in the World*, 107.

<sup>129</sup> Samuel L. Bayly, "What the Immigrants Found," *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 71; figures from Bayly's table 15, U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1911* (Washington D.C., 1912); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington D.C., 1960).

population.<sup>130</sup> Argentina's growth was most astounding: influenced by the hemisphere's most permissive immigration regime, Argentina's population and level of foreign investments quadrupled between 1870 and 1914, its exports increased 17 times, and its imports multiplied 72 fold.<sup>131</sup>

Such economic growth offered opportunity to new immigrants, and indeed, all three countries depended heavily on foreign labor to create these figures. Over the course of the nineteenth century, all three governments equated the immigration and settlement of workers with national prosperity and progress, leading each to develop liberal immigration policies, often while competing with one another. The earliest laws governing immigration typically served the interest of producing foreign immigration, through incentive programs to attract the “right” kind of immigrant. In the United States, for instance, the first federal laws governing the conduct of immigration appear in the Immigration Act of 1864. Called “an Act to Encourage Immigration,” the 1864 Immigration Act endorsed government sponsorship of migrant laborers. It established a federal Immigration Commissioner whose job consisted of verifying the employment contracts of would-be immigrants prior their arrival, offering loans to contract laborers, and facilitating transportation to American shores. It channeled all new immigration through New York City, where the Immigration Commissioner's office was, and gave the Commissioner powers to create incentives to encourage mass migration (both temporary and permanent) to the United States. The 1864 Act provided the basis for all U.S. immigration policy until 1882, when a new logic of immigration restriction took hold, disqualifying the infirm, the insane, the unskilled, and most infamously, new immigrants from China from entry into the United States.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ronald M. Schneider, “*Order and Progress: a Political History of Brazil* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 69-70.

<sup>131</sup> Bayly, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise*, 70-1.

<sup>132</sup> Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965*, 48-9.

Like the United States, Brazil encouraged and subsidized new immigrants through much of the nineteenth century, and like the United States and Argentina, Brazil targeted “desirable” European immigrants in particular. Brazil emerged under Don Pedro I after declaring its independence from Portugal in 1822, and very quickly after declaring its territorial sovereignty. Pedro I envisioned himself as a modernizer, and his new regime pushed for well-managed, state-sponsored mass immigration as the path to economic development and self-sufficiency.<sup>133</sup> In the mid-1820s, the imperial government subsidized the immigration and resettlement of Germans in the provincial towns surrounding Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo with the goal of creating agricultural colonies there. The project continued through the 1850s and was successful in expanding Brazil’s lands under cultivation and establishing Brazil’s coffee industry.<sup>134</sup> The imperial government saw the selective colonization of agrarian peasant groups as the best model for domesticating new lands, expanding cultivation, and shoring up Brazil’s claims upon its hinterland. Such settlement strategies were commonplace in the nineteenth century, not merely in the Americas but globally; in the same moment, for instance, the Ottoman Empire resettled Circassian, Arab, and Kurdish nomads in its southern provinces within carefully provisioned agricultural settlements, and in Egypt, Muhammad Ali constructed a massive, state-owned cotton industry that depended on the forced resettlement and corvée of local labor.<sup>135</sup> This was an historical moment, in other words, where free and forced labor migration was widely seen as a tool of the state, necessitated by the demand for economic development and the advancement of

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<sup>133</sup> Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>134</sup> Giralda Seyfirth, “German Immigration and Brazil’s Colonization Policy,” in Samuel L Baily and Eduardo José Miguez, eds. *Mass migration to modern Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2003), 231-3.

<sup>135</sup> Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 118-20; Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Diaspora in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 108-27; on Muhammad Ali’s use of forced migration and labor, see Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 79.



the world capitalist economy. But in Brazil, Dom Pedro I's incentive programs drew not only the Germans, Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese immigrants his government actively solicited, but also unintended Mediterranean groups: Sephardic Jews, Syrians, and Lebanese, who made their first appearance in the twilight of the Empire in the early 1880s.<sup>136</sup>

In Argentina, the Constitution of 1853 codified an open philosophy linking the free immigration of foreign workers to national prosperity. In articles 20 through 25, for instance, the Constitution endorsed the immigration of any national group that contributed demonstrably to Argentine society. The document especially emphasized the promotion of European immigration, and awarded foreign residents the same legal and civil rights (including property rights,) as native Argentine citizens. Any foreign arrival could apply for nationalization after only two years of residence in the Republic.<sup>137</sup>

Beginning around the mid-nineteenth century and speeding significantly during the 1860s, the governments of the United States, Brazil, and Argentina enacted policies and incentive programs designed to foster new labor immigration into their territories in the interest of economic expansion. Not only did the permissive immigration regimes of all three countries resemble one another (and they were likely written in reference to one another), it also appears that through them the governments of the United States, Brazil, and Argentina competed with for the most "desirable" immigrants, creating labor hierarchies while also influencing the flow of migrant labor between them.<sup>138</sup> For instance, when in the 1880s the United States placed new restrictions on ships coming from Mediterranean ports (citing health considerations, quarantining

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<sup>136</sup>Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 45.

<sup>137</sup>Bayly, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise*, 77.

<sup>138</sup>Dirk Hoerder, "Migration in the Atlantic Economies: Regional European Origins and Worldwide Expansion," *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 34-5.

ships or even sending them south of the equator),<sup>139</sup> greater numbers of Syrians, Italians, and other Mediterranean migrants arrived in Buenos Aires, where the customs laws remained comparative laxer. When Argentine nativists got wind of these changes, however, they renewed their efforts to restrict the free immigration of those potentially rejected by their northern neighbors.<sup>140</sup>

It was into this Atlantic world of countervailing tensions, disputations, and contradictions that Syrian and Lebanese found themselves in upon their arrival to “America.”<sup>141</sup> In these settler societies of the Atlantice, was immigration a path towards economic betterment, or an economic, medical, or moral threat? Were these Mediterranean “Turks” (an ethnic misnomer used by immigration authorities in all three receiving states until after 1900, referring to their status as Ottoman subjects)<sup>142</sup> to contribute to the commercial wealth of the cities they inhabited, or were they a venal and insular lot, as American nativists complained? In the nineteenth century American imaginary, new immigration was read in terms of “colonization” and “settlement.” The question that vexed American, Brazilian, and Argentinian public officials in the late nineteenth century was: to what extent were these new “colonists” like our own? Were these settlers or sojourners? Immigration was a critical issue not merely because it influenced economic development in these three American societies: it was an issue because immigration, and the incorporation of new immigrants, became a critical part of the Brazilian, Argentine, and

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<sup>139</sup>Ignacio Klich, “Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina: an uneasy *Pas de Deux*, 1988-1914,” in *Lebanese in the World*, 242-3.

<sup>140</sup>Bayly, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise*, 79.

<sup>141</sup> Indeed, many among the early Syrian arrivals were less aware of precisely where in “America” they had been brought: the United States, Brazil, and Argentina were all subsumed under this self-reported category, reflecting both the vague sense of the new immigrant’s heading (new migrants, Khater argues, often acting on tips, rumors, and success stories from “Amerka”) as well as the not-unheard of practice for passenger shipping agents to tell their passengers they were in the United States whether it that was accurate or not. Khater, *Inventing Home*, 62.

<sup>142</sup> The term also carried the implication of “Muslim” with it, a conflation that was often incorrect as many of these Syrian and Lebanese migrants in the Americas were Christian. Sarah M. A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 52-3.

American national narratives as well.<sup>143</sup> As “settler societies,” there was purportedly space for all newcomers, as long as they fit the narrative of the settler. It is unsurprising that like other Mediterranean immigrants, the Syrians sought to fit themselves into the mold of “colonist,” quickly folding themselves into the expanding Atlantic economies they encountered. As will be seen in the following sections, the development of certain types of migrant social institutions in the Syrian colonies of New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires was aided both by a desire to protect and integrate new immigrant into the colonies and by a need to present the colony’s self-sufficiency, productivity, and contribution to the larger settler societies they inhabited.

#### *The New York Colony: “Little Syria” on Washington Street*

Between the 1870s and 1926, some 200,000 Syrians immigrated to or through the United States of America, representing around 29 percent of the global Syrian diaspora.<sup>144</sup> The oldest and largest Syrian settlement in the U.S. was in Lower Manhattan, in the “Little Syria”

neighborhood on Washington Street. Situated between Battery Park and Rector Street, Washington Street became a hub for Syrian American commerce and religious life for some 8,000 Syrian immigrants, who

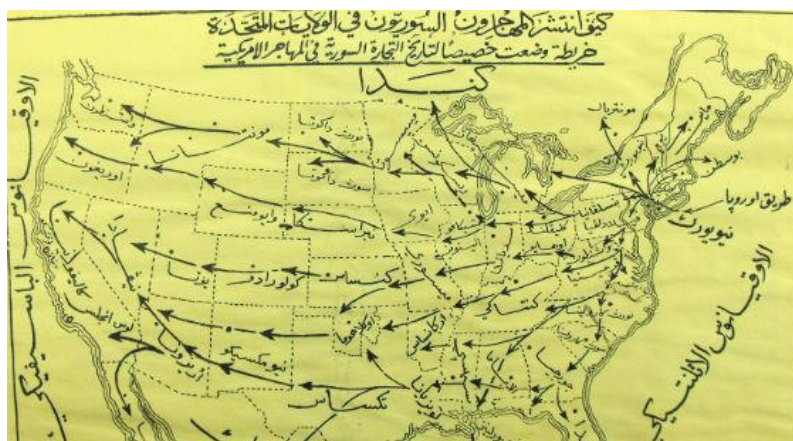


Figure 1: Map Showing Syrian American Peddling Routes from New York City, 1921. Source: Sallum Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya fi-l-Muhajar al-Amrikiyya* (New York: al-Matba'a al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya, 1921), 144.

<sup>143</sup> Donna Gabaccia argues that even the rising xenophobia seen in the late nineteenth century United States constituted a part of an increasingly globalized self-image that linked immigration with economic prosperity. Discussions about immigration were central to the construction of “American” identity, for multiculturalists and nativists alike. No one disputed the notion that foreign immigration was the best pathway to economic development; debates instead centered on the ethnic identities of new immigrants, and their influence upon that development. See Donna Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 76-7.

<sup>144</sup> Hashimoto, “Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939,” *Lebanese in the World*, 107.

blended with adjacent communities of Italian, Irish, Sephardic, Greek, and Eastern European immigrants entering through the ports at Ellis and Castle Islands.<sup>145</sup> Some went on to work for the railroads, others headed north for the textile mills of Lawrence, Boston, Fall River, and Lowell, Massachusetts, but the bulk of the early immigrants worked as peddlers and small-time entrepreneurs and an increasingly sophisticated Syrian carrying trade.<sup>146</sup> An entire Syrian economy developed in New York that joined the migration “industry” to itinerant peddling: shipping companies, customs agents, lenders, and employers within a dense network of personal contact. The Damascene U.S. Customs agent mentioned above, Najib Arbeely, also presided over his own employment agency devoted to extending credit to newcomers and getting them started in the sale of cheap cloth goods arriving at his port daily from Mediterranean Europe.<sup>147</sup> Soon enough, a banker from Mount Lebanon named Daniel Faour opened the colony’s first bank, which directed most of the immigrants’ commerce in small goods between port and peddlers. After arriving on Ellis Island, Syrian migrants depended on contacts like Arbeely and institutions like Faour Brothers bank to help arrange employment for them within or beyond Washington Street. Once they got there, these Syrians also found a sophisticated set of service institutions also ready to meet the social, cultural, and economic demands of a Syrian colony: boarding houses, hostels, restaurants, parlors and cafes provided the comforts of home and spaces of sociability to the emerging ethnic neighborhood.<sup>148</sup>

Although the earliest migrants to New York were predominantly male, Syrian women

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<sup>145</sup> Although census records only provide an incomplete survey of the Syrian population of the United States, the 1920 U.S. census ranks the Syrian community of New York as most populous at 7,760 immigrant registered. The second largest Syrian community was half that size, in Detroit, Michigan. See figure in Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 49.

<sup>146</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, 139-44.

<sup>147</sup> Naff, “New York: The Mother Colony,” *A Community of Many Worlds*, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Naff, “New York: The Mother Colony,” *A Community of Many Worlds*, 7. Of these emigrants, Akram Khater finds that 96 percent were in their forties or younger, *Inventing Home*, 53.

also made the journey. This was particularly true of young, unmarried women, who conducted a carrying trade in domestic items for the home, operated entirely within female circles.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, the immigration of Syrian women to the United States was conditioned in part by women's experience in silk production on Mount Lebanon. The eclipse of Syria's silk industry, the result of crashing prices and the rise of Japanese silk,<sup>150</sup> correlated to the outmigration of Syrian women and serves to explain two distinct streams of female migration: young, unmarried women workers (working in both textiles and peddling),<sup>151</sup> and married women rejoining male relatives or participating in the bride trade (itself the object of much contention in the colonies).<sup>152</sup>

What transformed Washington Street from a simple ethnic neighborhood into a Syrian “colony” was the development of transnational institutions that linked this Syrian settlement to others in the *mahjar* as well as to geographic Syria. Transnational commercial institutions, mutual aid societies, and the periodical press lent Little Syria its own social coherence by providing new arrivals with credit, lodging, and information about jobs or local culture, but these groups also operated between Syria’s communities abroad, altering the intellectual gravity of the entire diaspora. Washington Street became a significant site of Syrian publishing, in a flowering of print culture that peaked between 1900 and 1914. Syrian newspapers from New York were widely circulated, read by Syrians locally but also exported to other Syrian communities in the Americas. The more successful newspaper firms expanded into full-scale publishing houses: *al-Huda* and *Mirat al-Gharb* each produced significant numbers of serials, novellas, plays, and

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<sup>149</sup>Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 40-1; Naff, “New York: The Mother Colony,” *A Community of Many Worlds*, 8-9; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 82.

<sup>150</sup>Khater, *Inventing Home*, 57; interestingly, the rising importance of silk created female labor migration and a gendered cottage economy in Japan as well, paralleling the silk’s influence on Syrian gender norms. See Janet Hunter, “Female Migration and the Family Farm Economy in Interwar Japan,” in *Women, Gender, and Labor Migration. Historical and Global Perspectives*, ed. Pamela Sharpe (London: Routledge, 2003), 244-7.

<sup>151</sup> Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis,” 68.

<sup>152</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 67-9; Naff, *Becoming American*, 115-6; on marriage, see Khater, *Inventing Home*, 64-70.

didactic materials which they sold through subscription.<sup>153</sup> The Syrian presses of New York were, at the outset, closely linked with those in Cairo: not only did these newspapers regularly reprint editorials from *al-Muqtataf*, *al-Muqattam*, and *al-Hilal*, these papers also having been founded by Syrian and Lebanese emigrants.<sup>154</sup> The fruition of this new print culture, furthermore, fostered new patterns of migration, as Washington Street drew some of Syria's most well-known writers and public intellectuals after 1900, for instance, Farah Antun, who spent nine years developing an American branch for his Cairene paper *al-Jami'a*, or Najib Diab, who founded *Mirat al-Gharb* after following the Arbeelys from Cairo.<sup>155</sup> If Cairo was the place to cut one's teeth in the newspaper industry in the 1880s and 1890s, after 1900, that place was unambiguously New York City. Where Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II's censorship policies lent the Syrian presses of Egypt their vitality after 1878, the growing commercial and political significance of Washington Street brought the newspapermen further abroad.<sup>156</sup>

The vibrancy of New York City's Syrian press was helped along by a tendency towards political and religious particularism, as well as the widely-held belief that the newspaper role was to "represent" the Syrian *mahjar* as a whole (a sentiment that produced an enormous amount of competition between Syrian newspapers with opposing political views). Henry Malki demonstrates, for example, that each political or confessional group in New York had its own publishing house by the eve of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution: among the largest papers, there was the "Maronite" paper (*al-Huda*), the "Orthodox" paper (*Mirat al-Gharb*), the pro-Hamidian

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<sup>153</sup> An 1919 ad in *Mirat al-Gharb* lists available titles, giving a sense of the type of material favored by its readership: poetry collections; romance novels; primers on English canon law and American immigration laws; classical Arab history, as well as histories of the Russian Tsars, French revolution, and of the Arabic press; devotional literature; reviews of contemporary music and the arts. "Maktabat Mirat al-Gharb," *Mirat al-Gharb* 2 January 1919, 7.

<sup>154</sup> Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Rise of Global Radicalism*, 188; Malki, *al-Sihafat al-'Arabiyya*, 10.

<sup>155</sup> Malki, *al-Sihafat al-'Arabiyya*, 45-6; 65-6.

<sup>156</sup> Philip di Tarrazi, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Adabiyya, 1933), vol. 2, 406.

paper (*al-Bayan*, also called the “Druze” paper by Malki), and an anti-clerical paper (*al-Muhajir*), among others.<sup>157</sup> Several historians of the émigré press have built towards a “typology” of these newspapers on the basis of their respective political affiliations.<sup>158</sup> But the orientations of these newspapers were constantly in flux, rapidly changing with the political landscape as well as with the demands of their readership. *al-Huda*, for instance, typically described as a Francophile, pro-Lebanese Independence paper with pro-clerical leanings, went through periods where its editors made profound criticisms of French ambitions in the Levant and critiques of the Maronite clergy who held close relations with the French. Amin al-Rihani, a writer from Mount Lebanon whose work has been described as secular humanist, anti-clerical, and even socialist by historians,<sup>159</sup> wrote weekly editorials for *al-Huda* during its first years in New York.<sup>160</sup> In 1905, al-Rihani’s criticisms of the Maronite Church became so strident that Mukarzil dismissed him from the newspaper, but a wave of letters of protest by al-Rihani’s readers soon convinced Mukarzil to reinstate his regular column. The interruption lasted mere weeks.<sup>161</sup> Although Syrian newspapers in New York had clear editorial bents and political perspectives, this incident demonstrates that a simple classification of papers on such bases papers over very real contests and debates occurring within their very pages. These papers were

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<sup>157</sup> This sample typology is adapted from Henry Malki, *al-Sihafat al-‘Arabiyya*, 12.

<sup>158</sup> The periodical typology is a common ordering principle for historians describing this press, and the most common system is to break down titles along the lines of confession (a problematic heuristic in light of the evolving political orientations and the ongoing debates between editors and their readers). For examples of such typologies, see Malki, *al-Sihafat al-‘Arabiyya*, 12; Joseph Ilyas, *al-Sihafat al-Lubnaniyya: al-Qamus al-Musawwar* (Beirut: al-Matba’a Antoun Ruhanna al-Shamali, 1997); Ibrahim ‘Abdalla al-Musallima, *al-Sihafat al-‘Arabiyya fi-l-Mahjar* (Cairo: al-‘Arabi li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi’, 1994), 35-50; ‘Amr Ibrahim al-Qandalchi, *al-Arab fi-l-Mahjar: Wujuduhum, Sihafatuhum, Jama’iyyatuhum* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Wizarat al-A’alam, 1977), among others.

<sup>159</sup> Nijmi Hajjar, *The Politics and Poetics of Ameen Rihani: the Humanist Ideology of an Arab-American Intellectual and Activist* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2010), 105-112.

<sup>160</sup> Like *al-Huda* editor Na‘um Mukarzil, Amin al-Rihani was from Freike, in Mount Lebanon. The men were friends and occasional travel partners, despite that their historical legacies place them at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

<sup>161</sup> Hajjar, *The Politics and Poetics of Ameen Rihani*, 47; the exchanges involved here are reproduced in Amin al-Rihani, *al-Qawmiyyat*.

about contest and conflict as much as consensus.

Recognizing how in flux the political leanings of these newspapers were and how significantly editorial politics bore down on them is important because doing so changes the nature of their political conflicts. When *al-Huda* and *Mirat al-Gharb* clashed acrimoniously over the place of the clergy in Syrian and Lebanese politics, for instance, the explosive debates recorded in the press were less often about interconfessional politics they were about the emergence and development of a Syrian public sphere through print culture (see Chapter 2). Where typologists of the press have read the colorful rhetoric, accusations of treason, and internecine struggles of Syrian American newspaper editorials as evidence of the colony's fractiousness, I argue that the development of this discourse, however colorful, shows a community in formation. The explosion in Syrian print culture in New York City, and the infighting between the editors of Washington Street (whether vying for ideological positions of subscriber numbers), gave the Syrians of the New York colony a set of shared scripts and something to talk about as a community.

The question of citizenship in the United States was one of the New York colony's first public issues, debated at length in the press. Although the "open door" immigration policies laid out in the 1864 Immigration Act remained technically in force, the rising tide of xenophobia in the 1880s led to new restrictions on Asian immigration and created new obstacles for Syrian immigrants seeking legal naturalization. The first federal restrictions on new immigration came with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred new migration from East Asia and created a new logic for assessing the "desireability" of immigrants along the hierarchies of racial and national origins as well as issues of "assimilability." Although the Syrians were not the target of the Exclusion Act, the introduction of new principles for assessing the race and national origins



of Asian immigrants between 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1917 (which placed strict quotas on the basis of national origins) created an environment that conflated whiteness with access to U.S. citizenship.<sup>162</sup> Sarah Gualtieri demonstrates that in this setting, Syrian American groups in New York City to fight for the redefinition of their community as legally “white,” distinguishing themselves from other “Asiatic” immigrants by their historical roots in the Christian Holy Land and their racial connection to the Semites.<sup>163</sup> Publishers Na‘um and Sallum Mukarzil as well as the Syrian American Association of New York (hereafter SAA) contested court decisions that denied Syrian immigrants access to citizenship. Beginning in the federal Appellate Court in 1909, the SAA sued for unrestricted Syrian immigration and a “white” legal status, culminating in a federal decision in *George Dow v United States* in 1914, which ruled that as a Semitic people with Judeo-Christian roots, the Syrian people were legally Caucasian and thus eligible for U.S. naturalization.

Gualtieri notes in her discussion of the *Dow* case that the theatrics of Syrian American whiteness reverberated around the entire *mahjar*, enervating discussions about race, ethnicity, and national identity in the transnational Arabic press.<sup>164</sup> The specter of Ottoman subjects living abroad obtaining American citizenship (and discarding their allegiances to the Empire) prompted the imperial government to rethink its own policies governing travel and emigration, placing new restrictions on passenger ships leaving the port of Beirut.<sup>165</sup> At the same time, the Ottoman Consulate in New York City placed diplomatic pressure on the U.S. government to limit the

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<sup>162</sup>The Immigration Act of 1917 revealed a desire to cultivate a specific type of immigrant body while culling away immigrants with moral or medical failings. Those excluded: “all idiots, imbeciles, the feeble-minded, epileptics, and persons with chronic alcoholism and tuberculosis”, “paupers, beggars, vagrants, and persons with physical defects that would prevent an individual from making a living,” “polygamists,” “prostitutes,” felons, and “persons from Asia.” Those especially encouraged to immigrate included skilled laborers and professionals.

<sup>163</sup>Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 3-7.

<sup>164</sup>Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 64-7.

<sup>165</sup>Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America,” 181-2.

naturalization of Ottoman subjects living there.<sup>166</sup> The Consulate also engaged in public relations overtures aimed at Syrian, Armenian, and Anatolian emigrants living in the city; In 1909, for instance, Ottoman consul Mundji Bey strongly encouraged Ottoman subjects living abroad to return to the Empire, and he invoked the progressive aims of the new constitutionalist government in doing so.

Despite the Ottoman Consulate's efforts to stem the flow of Syrians abroad, the arrival of Syrians to the New York colony continued apace between 1900 and 1914, largely unchecked by the Federal laws that sought to limit new immigration from Asia. During the dislocations of World War I, Syrian emigration halted for a time owing to an Allied blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean, but it quickly resumed in 1918 and reached pre-War numbers by 1924. However, that year, the enactment of a new federal legislation, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, instituted a punitive national-origins quota for immigration from Syria at 100 new arrivals annually.<sup>167</sup> With that, the bulk of new Syrian and Lebanese emigration flowed not into the United States but towards South America, particularly Brazil and Argentina. The Syrian colony on Washington Street, the largest single community of Syrians in the Americas before 1914, was soon eclipsed by the burgeoning settlement in São Paulo, Brazil.

*A Colonia: the Syrians of São Paulo on Rua 25 de Março*

After World War I, the Syrian and Lebanese community in Brazil became the second largest in the American *mahjar*, and historians estimate that by 1926, around 177,000 Syrians

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<sup>166</sup>Akarli, "Ottoman Attitudes Towards Emigration," *Lebanese in the World*, 130-1. Indeed, the Ottoman Consul in New York had reason to worry; Syrian immigration mounted after 1910, peaking in 1913 with just under 25,000 new arrivals annually; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 53.

<sup>167</sup>The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, set up a system of visas and quotas together; the quotas were in theory based on the number of immigrants from any given nationality listed on the US Census of 1890; Syria's quota was set at 100 annual admittances. Mae Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: a Reexamination of the Reed Johnson Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (1999), 67-70.

lived there, or 25.7 percent of the diaspora.<sup>168</sup> Although slightly smaller than the numbers of Syrians living in the entire United States, Syrians settlement in Brazil was more tightly concentrated in the cities on the coast, making São Paulo the single largest urban Syrian colony by the mid-1920s.<sup>169</sup>

The first Syrian immigrant to São Paulo is believed to have arrived in 1881, but mass migration did not commence for ten years after that. After 1891, however, Syrian migration into Brazil simply exploded: between 1881 and 1891, only 158 Middle Eastern immigrants came to Brazil (an ambiguous figure that includes Syrians), but between 1891 and 1916, the Brazilian government would document the arrival of 106,184 Ottoman Syrians in Brazil.<sup>170</sup> The mass immigration of other groups into Brazil mirrors this trend: between 1890 and 1919, over 2.6 million new immigrants arrived in Brazil: Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Germans, and Mediterranean Jews alongside the Syrians and Lebanese.<sup>171</sup> Why mass immigration, and why this moment? Like other American settler states, Brazil's economy was centered on plantation-style agriculture fueled by African slave labor. Over the course of the 1880s, large landowners in Brazil found the continuation of African slavery an untenable political position. In 1888 (twenty-five years after the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States, and some fifty years after the British Empire sought to extinguish the trans-Atlantic slave trade), Brazil formally abolished slavery. In nearly the same breath, the Empire of Dom Pedro II came to an end in 1889 in a bloodless coup that gave way to a Brazilian Republic. The new Republic's first order of

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<sup>168</sup> Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939," *Lebanese in the World*, 107.

<sup>169</sup> Between 1901 and 1930, Syrian annual immigration to the Brazilian state of São Paulo averaged around 40% of all Syrians entering Brazil. Of these immigrants, over half moved to the city of São Paulo; Clark Knowlton, *Spatial and Social Mobility of the Syrians and Lebanese in the City of São Paulo* (Doctoral Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1955), 60-4.

<sup>170</sup> Shukri al-Khuri, "Sajal al-Istibaqiyya: Awa'il tarikhiyya li-l-Hijra al-Lubnaniyya fi-l-Barazil," *Abu al-Hawl* (unknown 1924 issue), 3-5; Clark Knowlton, "The Social and Spatial Mobility of the Syrian and Lebanese Community of São Paulo, Brazil," in *Lebanese in the World*, 291.

<sup>171</sup> Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil*, 62.

business was the encouragement of mass immigration to revive Brazil's agricultural economy through free labor to replace the slavery institution.<sup>172</sup>

From 1891 into World War I, Syrian and Lebanese immigration into Brazil continued at a pace between 1,000-4,000 arrivals annually, and peaked after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.<sup>173</sup> During that period, between 4,000 and 8,000 Syrians entered annually, and in 1913 a record 11,101 Syrians came to Brazil, a large portion of them headed to São Paulo.<sup>174</sup> The disruptions of World War I stymied the flow for a time, but it quickly rebounded in 1919 and continued through the 1920s. Like their compatriots in New York, the majority of São Paulo's Syrians arriving in Brazil were unmarried (63.5 percent), male (70 percent), and a slight majority travelling without family (56 percent), a trend they shared with other immigrants entering between 1890 and 1939.<sup>175</sup> But as in New York, young single men arriving alone participated in a transnational proletarian family economy, and many of them return to Syria at least once to call on male relatives or to marry.<sup>176</sup>

The permissiveness of Brazil's immigration regime in the 1890s made it a particularly attractive option for arriving Syrians, particularly because this very moment coincided with a trend towards restrictionism in the United States. Although federal laws in the U.S. did not prohibit the free migration of Syrians or other Mediterraneans, clauses in the 1882 Exclusion Act allowed the Immigration Commissioner in New York to restrict new immigration on medical grounds, quarantining steamships coming from the Mediterranean or turning them around

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<sup>172</sup> Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil*, 60-1.

<sup>173</sup> Shukri al-Khuri, "Sijil al-Asbaqiyya: Awa'il Tarikhiyya li-l-Hijra al-Lubnaniyya fi al-Barazil," *Abu al-Hawl* (unknown 1924 issue), 3-5; Clark Knowlton, "The Social and Spatial Mobility of the Syrian and Lebanese Community of São Paulo, Brazil," in *Lebanese in the World*, 291.

<sup>174</sup> Knowlton, *Spatial and Social Mobility of the Syrians and Lebanese in the City of São Paulo*, 60.

<sup>175</sup> Secretário da Agricultura do Estado de São Paulo, *Boletim do Serviço de Imigração e Colonização*, no. 2, out. 1940; via Truzzi, *Patrícios: Sírios e Libaneses em São Paulo*, 30.

<sup>176</sup> Truzzi, *Patrícios: Sírios e Libaneses em São Paulo*, 30.

(whereupon steamship operators would make a new heading for South America). Concerns about trachoma, tuberculosis, and even cholera prompted the authorities at Ellis Island to turn away scores of Syrians and Lebanese who subsequently arrived in São Paulo. Similarly, Syrians and Lebanese who failed to meet an ever-restrictive list of criteria for eligibility – local sponsorship, financial security, or literacy, for instance – might then find themselves in Brazil.<sup>177</sup> Many of those who arrived in São Paulo in this manner worked there for a period of weeks, months, or years while planning a second trip north.<sup>178</sup> Others would settle into the growing community on *Rua 25 de Marco* more permanently. Once in Brazil, Syrian and Lebanese immigrants swiftly found work in urban commerce, and particularly itinerant peddling. Peddling was a savvy choice for a variety of reasons: credit was readily available, the initial investment very small, and the trade very profitable; it was the ideal type of work for the unattached and entrepreneurial young Syrian man.

However, the development of a Syrian carrying trade centered on São Paulo flew in the face of official expectations. Since the days of Don Pedro I, Brazil's lenient immigration regime was aimed squarely at producing a particular kind of immigrant: the agricultural laborer, whose toil in the field previously worked by slaves would not only enhance Brazil's export-driven economy in cash crops like coffee, but would domesticate new lands, displace the old imperial class of large landholders from the days of the *latifundia*, and "whiten" Brazil's labor force.<sup>179</sup> The image of the Syrian peddler (called the *mascate*) became a pervasive negative motif in Brazilian anti-immigration discourse. Peddlers were depicted as vagrant and parasitic, foiled against the virtues of intensive, sedentary labor in the agricultural settlements. But despite

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<sup>177</sup>Clark Knowlton, "The Social and Spatial Mobility of the Syrian and Lebanese Community of São Paulo, Brazil," in *Lebanese in the World*, 290-1.

<sup>178</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, 109.

<sup>179</sup> Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil*, 52-3.

accusations of venality, the Syrian peddlers fulfilled a necessary part of the pastoral economy. By delivering small household items, textiles, sewing notions, salt, hats, and the like from urban São Paulo to the plantations (*fazendas*) of the hinterland, the Syrian peddling economy assisted and promoted Brazil's pastoral economy and operated in stasis with it.<sup>180</sup> And by capitalizing on the lack of commercial infrastructure in the rural countryside, the Syrians profited immensely, as reflected by the affluence of the São Paulo colony around the turn of the twentieth century.

As in Syrian New York, textiles, sewing notions and ready-wear clothing constituted a significant chunk of the Syrian carrying trade.<sup>181</sup> Many of these items even originated at the ports, even brought to the Americas by Syrian agents and migrants themselves. Everywhere in the *mahjar* the Syrians dealt extensively in cloth, and not merely in the Americas: as weaving and piecework boomed in turn of the century Homs, Hama, and Aleppo,<sup>182</sup> Syrian-owned textile factories opened in England (the famous "millet of Manchester" that exported its textiles to Syrian communities in West Africa and the Americas).<sup>183</sup> In New York City and the mills of New England, Syrian and Lebanese migrants engaged in weaving and garment-making. But Brazil's Syrian cloth economy presented a major point of distinction between the São Paulo colony and its other counterparts in the Americas: in Brazil, Syrians did not join into the existing textile economy. They took it over, and relied on transnational connections linking the whole Syrian "colonial" world as markets for its cotton cloth.<sup>184</sup>

In 1903, two Syrian traders, Nami and Antonius Jafet, arrived in São Paulo. Both graduates of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, the pair had already made a sizeable fortune

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<sup>180</sup>Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 50-1.

<sup>181</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, 171.

<sup>182</sup> As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 386-70.

<sup>183</sup> Fred Halliday, "The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and the Cotton Trade," in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993), 171-2.

<sup>184</sup> Truzzi, *Patrícios: Sírios e Libaneses em São Paulo*, 51.

in transnational Syrian commerce, wholesaling from ports in Beirut and Mediterranean Europe to provide goods for the peddling trade of the Americas since the 1890s. By the time the brothers themselves emigrated abroad, they had already participated in the *mahjar*'s commercial economy for nearly a decade. What led them abroad was a new acquisition in São Paulo; the family had reinvested the proceeds derived from their wholesale business into a piece of land in Ypiranga, just outside São Paulo.<sup>185</sup> On it, they planned the construction of a cotton processing plant, where the Jafets would refine, dye, and weave raw American cotton into bulk textiles bound for the wholesaler markets of the Syrian *mahjar*. By processing and refining the cloth themselves (as opposed to shipping it from various ports in the Mediterranean), the Jafets quickly became one of the *mahjar*'s most successful entrepreneurial families. Relying almost exclusively on Syrian labor contracted in São Paulo or from Syria, Nami Jafet helped foster a transnational Syrian commercial economy in the production, finishing, and piecework of cotton cloth. His factory opened in 1907, and with over 1,000 mechanized looms, it was the largest of its kind in Brazil.

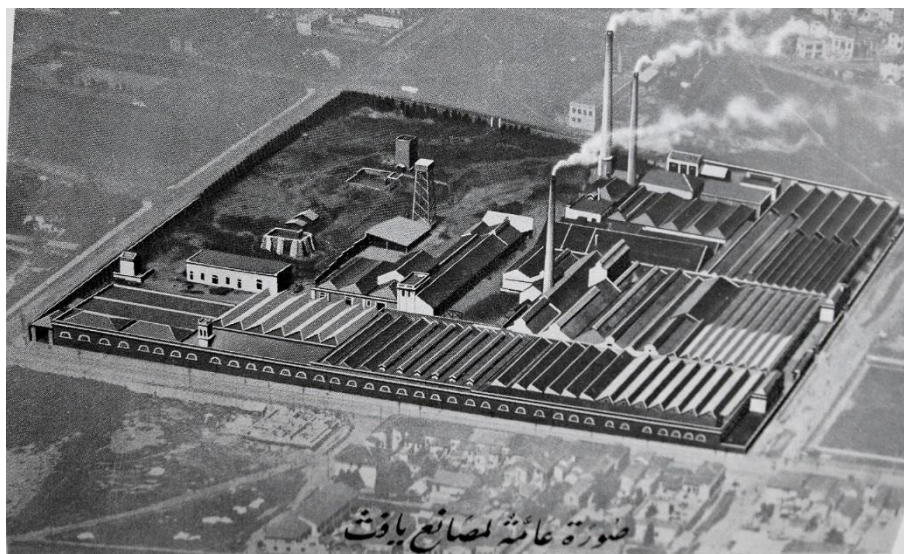


Figure 2: Jafet Factory in Ypiranga, Brazil; completed in 1907. Source: Antunius Jafet, *Na'im Jafet: Hayatuhu, Amaluhu, wa-Atharuhu* (São Paulo: Antunius Jafet s.p., 1934), 51.

<sup>185</sup> Antunius Jafet, *Dhikrayyat*, 11-2.

Nami Jafet situated himself neatly into the economic aims and interests of both the Syrian *mahjar* and those of Brazilian society at large. On the one hand, Jafet's use of Syrian immigrant labor fit within Brazilian economic ideas linking labor migration to economic expansion and national progress.<sup>186</sup> On the other hand, Jafet's factory produced cotton cloth that was exported to the rest of the Syrian world, sold on New York's Washington Street, on Avenida Corrientes in Buenos Aires, in Syrian neighborhoods across the Americas and the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1906, Jafet drafted a public proposal for developing a cooperative Syrian economy within urban Brazil: "Commerce is like war in that both pursuits require union and audacity," he wrote in the local Syrian newspaper *al-Afkar*, "we will succeed in becoming well-established and winning over our competitors, but only through solidarity and synergy."<sup>187</sup> Jafet called for the creation of a collective economy for the Syrian colony that worked in the interest of Syrians abroad and at home, and called for the shunning of political and confessional enmities (*al-ta'assub*) in service to this goal. In the spirit of cooperative endeavor, he pledged lower margins for Syrian traders who purchased his cloth and devoted a significant portion of the profits to educational, philanthropic, and humanistic organizations both in Brazil and in Syria.

Cotton made the Jafet family fantastically wealthy but also boosted the commercial profile of the Brazil's Syrian community. In 1913, Nami Jafet organized Syrian labor and business owners by founding *al-Ghurfa al-Tijariyya al-Suriyya*, a diasporic Chamber of Commerce. Syrian and Lebanese merchants, industrialists, bankers, and professionals joined the endeavor, which sought to manage the immigrant colony's commercial interests, reduce competition within the community, and to represent Syrian business to Brazil's Republican

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<sup>186</sup> Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil*, 63.

<sup>187</sup> Nami Jafet, "al-Suri fi-Tijaratihi," *al-Afkar*, 3 March 1906.



government.<sup>188</sup> The organization's central hall provided space for local Syrian merchants to gather and discuss matters of mutual interest; during World War I, it doubled as a space for fundraising for the homeland. By the 1920s, the *Ghurfa Tijariyya* had grown into a lobby powerful enough to pursue grievances with the Brazilian government, for instance in 1925 when it submitted a petition demanding that the government protect the price of Brazilian cotton, then undergoing an international price crash.<sup>189</sup>

One of the principle impacts that the establishment of the Jafet cotton plant had on Syrian migrants in Brazil was the “capitalization” of São Paulo. Before 1907, small Syrian communities appears across several Brazilian cities at once: Rio de Janeiro (another major immigrant port), Santos, Minas Gerais, and Campinas hosted smaller Syrian communities, each with their ethnic institutions and periodical presses. But as cotton boomed in São Paulo and a growing Syrian elite emerged on *Rua 25 de Marzo*, several Arabic periodicals relocated there, and ethnic clubs, credit agencies, and social welfare groups followed suit, forming the nucleus of a sophisticated social infrastructure and immigrant ethnic leadership. By 1914, more than fourteen distinct Arabic newspapers were read in São Paulo alone, each with its distinctive editorial and political persuasion, mirroring the industry in New York, and engaging with it in print.<sup>190</sup>

Brazil's Syrian textile industry drove both a substantial remittance economy and Syrian investment in Brazilian public spaces. Local Syrian and Lebanese exporters and retailers in cotton cloth did quite well for themselves, sending home an average of 2,000 and 4,000 French francs annually by the early 1920s, “a staggering amount,” reports Jeffrey Lesser, “considering

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<sup>188</sup> Jafet, *Dhikrayyat*, 31-2.

<sup>189</sup> *Fatat Lubnan*, 24 November 1925, reprinted in Jafet, *Dhikrayyat*, 33.

<sup>190</sup> Elia Safa, *L'Emigration Libanaise*, 64-6; Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity*, 53; Phillipe de Tarrazi, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya*, 403. Ilham Khuri-Makdisi notes, furthermore, that Tarrazi enumerated a total of some 95 Arabic language newspapers in Brazil by 1922, topping New York City's grand total of 79, Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 51.

that a one-way ticket from Syria to South America cost only 250 francs” at the time.<sup>191</sup> Many of these retailers later opened their own factories: by 1934, for instance, there were 225 registered Syrian factories in the state of São Paulo alone, the majority engaging in textile production.<sup>192</sup> Beyond remittances, Syrian and Lebanese elites in São Paulo invested in Syrian schools, hospitals, charities, and even public monuments on *Rua 25 de Marzo*. In 1922, Basil Jafet commissioned a statue of Brazilian national hero Ximenes in celebration of Brazil’s Centennial, revealing the extent to which the community situated itself between two settler societies, the Syrian and the American.<sup>193</sup>

*Avenida Corrientes in Buenos Aires: Piastres en la Plata*

Argentina’s experience of the late nineteenth century mirrored those of the United States and Brazil in many ways. Argentina abolished slavery with the new Constitution of 1853, and although its more modest agricultural economy had never reached the proportions of either the plantations in Brazil or the United States, the 1853 document drew clear links between desires for a white working class and the encouragement of new European immigration. Like Brazil, the Argentine government undertook settlement programs and created monetary incentives for agricultural migrant laborers from Germany, Italy, and Spain as a means of whitening the Argentine population. Like the United States, Argentina weathered an attempted secession (in 1880), and the ruling National Autonomist Party responded by increasing federal control over the provinces and announcing a wide-reaching agricultural development project to remake the countryside as a feeder for Argentinian industry. And mirroring both the U.S. and Brazil, Argentina depended increasingly on foreign labor as a means of expanding its economic

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<sup>191</sup>Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity*, 54; Ruppin, “Migration from and to Syria,” 271.

<sup>192</sup>São Paulo (1936b, 28); as reported in Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 212.

<sup>193</sup>Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity*, 55-7.

productivity in a global economy centered on export.

But among the three settler societies, Argentina was the most successful in enticing new immigration: between 1889 and 1914, Argentina's population doubled (to 7.8 million), and foreign-born immigrants accounted for 30 percent of its 1914 population.<sup>194</sup> In a seismic migration wave of 2.5 million, an estimated 104,000 (around 4 percent) came from the Middle East, arriving primarily from Syria.<sup>195</sup> Syrian immigration into Buenos Aires was, it seems, the unintended consequence of enticement programs built by the Argentinian government to bring white European migrants from the ports of Barcelona and Marseilles.<sup>196</sup> Like in Brazil, Syrian immigration to Argentina began suddenly: in 1889, 2,020 new Syrians arrived, up from just 31 the previous year.<sup>197</sup> Why? Ignacio Klich argues that the Argentinian government's incentive programs produced this sudden wave; in 1887, President Miguel Juárez Celman introduced an immigration program that offered cash subsidies, reimbursement for travel expenses, and access to public hostels opening at the port in Buenos Aires to any immigrant deemed productive and "desirable" by his state. The passenger steamship companies operating in Buenos Aires took note of these new funds, and brought record numbers of Germans, Italians, European Jews, and Syrians to Argentine shores. President Celman's earmark, aimed at stimulating European immigration, helped produce an Asiatic, "Turkish" migration flow, prompting Argentine nationalists to call shrilly for greater specificity and oversight into which immigrants were eligible for these incentives. In 1890, Celman's government limited Syrian access to state subsidies by earmarking them for European immigrants destined for agricultural labor and agrarian development only.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Stephen Hyland, "'Arisen from a Deep Slumber': Transnational Politics and Competing Nationalisms among Syrian Immigrants in Argentina, 1900-1922," in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, 553.

<sup>195</sup> Klich, "Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina," *Lebanese in the World*, 242-6.

<sup>196</sup> Klich, "Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina," *Lebanese in the World*, 248.

<sup>197</sup> Alejandro Schamun, *La Siria Nueva*, 9; Klich, "Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina," *Lebanese in the World*, 271.

<sup>198</sup> Klich, "Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina," *Lebanese in the World*, 272-3.

But even if Syrian and Lebanese immigrants in Argentina quickly found themselves ineligible for state subsidies, they also discovered that Argentina had the most liberal constitutional provisions regarding immigrants' right in the Western Hemisphere. The conservative National Autonomist government of Miguel Celman, in power since 1880, included some of the country's most outspoken Argentinian nativists, but the Constitution had been written by the Liberals: it stipulated that all "foreigners (irrespective of race or national origins) enjoy... all of the civil rights accorded [Argentine] citizens," a hospitable approach to immigration that allowed uninhibited Syrian entry into the country without pressure to obtain documentation or seek citizenship.<sup>199</sup>

After 1889, a Syrian *colonia* grew up in Buenos Aires, centered on its commercial hub *Avenida Corrientes*. As in the rest of the Americas, pack-peddling and other forms of itinerant commerce provided the seeds for the growth of related industries, particularly dry-goods retail and banking. During the 1890s, around 85 percent of Syrian migrants in Buenos Aires participated in some form of local commerce, drawing the ire of Argentinian nativists who saw the "turco" peddler as a mendicant and criminal. Stephen Hyland argues that the Syrian peddler defied official expectations that foreign labor would people the Pampas, delivering Argentina into an agricultural renaissance. Despite the fact that Syrians essentially ran a secondary economy in service to Argentinian agriculture (in Hyland's case, the expanding sugar industry of nearby Tucuman), popular resentment graced the pages of the Argentinian press, for instance in 1902 when *Caras y Caretas* announced the arrival of the peddlers thus: "A plague of Turkish pedlars has appeared, worse than if they were locusts. The police must prevent them from

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<sup>199</sup>Indeed, by 1914, only 385 Syrian immigrants had successfully obtained Argentine citizenship. Klich, "*Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina*," *Lebanese in the World*, 256.

continuing to commit such abuse.”<sup>200</sup> By the first years of the twentieth century, though, the various facets of the textile industry had consumed the colony: arriving immigrants engaged in weaving, piece-work, wholesaling and the sale of ready-wear clothing, oftentimes selling these wares to other recent immigrants in Buenos Aires.

The Buenos Aires colony developed a series of very successful textile companies, family enterprises that depended on transnational circuits of labor, finance, and markets that spanned the *mahjar*. That dozens of Syrians living in Buenos Aires often made the progression from petty retail into unbridled success as textile moguls illustrates the degree to which transnational Syrian industries met the demands of Argentina’s rapidly expanding market. An adolescent named Isaac Ilyas ‘Annan, for example, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1901 with two acquaintances from his village. After receiving 500 pesos from the local mutual aid society, ‘Annan became a peddler selling trinkets and bolts of cloth outside the city, sending a portions of his profits home to Syria. In 1910, he had saved enough money to establish his own storefront on *Avenida Corrientes*; he opened “El Siglo” and sold ready-wear clothing, dry goods, and an assortment of Syrian books and newspapers. He sent for his two brothers, Miguel and Tanus, who arrived from Syria on the eve of World War I; by War’s end, both brothers returned home but Isaac stayed on, opening his first textile factory in Pergamino, a growing city outside of Buenos Aires.<sup>201</sup> After 1920, Isaac ‘Annan founded the *Sociedad Siria de Socorros Mutuos de Pergamino*, an organization that subsidized new Syrian immigrants to Argentina and fed his factory with skilled Syria textile workers. The shirtwaists sewn at the ‘Annan factory were sold across Argentina but also made their way to New York City, where they were sold by the Manhattan Shirt Company.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Hyland, ““Arisen from Deep Slumber,” 555.

<sup>201</sup> Liliana Cazorla, *Presencia de inmigrantes sirios y libaneses en el desarrollo industrial argentino* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Los Cedros, 2000), 59-60.

<sup>202</sup> Cazorla, *Presencia de inmigrantes sirios y libaneses en el desarrollo industrial argentino*, 62.

Syrian newspapers emerged in Buenos Aires concurrently with their New York and São Paulo counterparts: the most prominent was *Assalam*, established by Wadi' Schamun in 1902 and later edited by his son, Alejandro. *Assalam* was one of many Arabic titles in the colony (Buenos Aires had five Arabic language newspapers by 1907),<sup>203</sup> but it was particularly important because it was linked to the Ottoman diplomatic corps and partially subsidized by the Ottoman government.<sup>204</sup> Its editor, Alejandro Schamun, also worked as a *dragoman* at the Ottoman Consulate established in 1910.<sup>205</sup> Schamun was particularly interested in encouraging the Syrians in Argentina to adopt agricultural work, arguing that the Syria's propensity towards urban and itinerant commerce fueled Argentinian nativism. Pushing to restyle Syrian immigrants as peasant-settlers was perhaps a lost cause, but the ten years before WWI saw impressive Syrian economic advancements among in the country: in 1907, Schamun enumerated some 6,500 businesses nationwide, collectively worth 65,750,000 Argentine pesos. At the same time, 30,000 new immigrants from Syria arrived in Argentina annually.<sup>206</sup>

*Shared Structures, Common Culture: Why the Syrian Colonies Should be Considered Together*

This dissertation connects the Syrian colonies of New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires within a single transnational unit of analysis, justified by the presence of networks of migration, philanthropy, and activism as well as a shared (albeit contentious) political culture. The forgoing sections have demonstrated the many ways that Syria's largest American colonies developed comparably, yielding similar commercial activities, social infrastructure, and intellectual institutions. All three developed in relationship with the permissive immigration regimes of the United States, Argentina, and Brazil, and each colony fit itself within the

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<sup>203</sup>*La Nacion* 7 May 1907, 8.

<sup>204</sup>Cazorla, *Presencia de inmigrantes sirios y libaneses en el desarrollo industrial argentino*, 40-1.

<sup>205</sup>*Assalam* 12 December 1909.

<sup>206</sup>*La Nacion* 7 May 1907, 8.

economies and social narratives of the nineteenth century “settler society.” In each place, the Syrians formed ethnic neighborhoods which appeared alongside other groups of Mediterranean peoples—Italians, Greeks, Mediterranean Jews, Armenians, and Anatolian Turks—who all came to Atlantic port cities in response to global economic pressures and shared labor opportunities.<sup>207</sup> In all three cities, the influx of Syrians raised new questions about ethnic culture and the desirability of Arab immigrants within their host societies. In each colony, in turn, Syrian organizations and the press engaged in spirited debates about assimilation, citizenship, and settlement, creating a transnational Arabophone public sphere.

Such patterns of similarity between the Syrian colonies across the Americas leads this historian into pursuit of transnational connections: with so many networks of migration, commerce, print culture, and remittance set down between these three Syrian colonies, what impact did they have on *mahjari* political culture? Was there a “*mahjari*” political culture, and if so, how, when, and why did it emerge? What were its implications on the changing politics of the Mashriq? The emigrants’ growing affluence, the development of a remittance economy, and return migration (Akram Khater and Kohei Hashimoto both demonstrate that up to one-half of Syrian emigrants ultimately returned to the Mashriq),<sup>208</sup> each contributed to the construction of a bourgeois cultural politics that “came home” in the form of red tile roofs, consumer fetishism, Western clothing, and diaspora-born debates about “tradition” versus “modernity.” As Akram Khater puts it, “not only did the experiences of Lebanese emigrants greatly amplify the intensity and reach of debates within Lebanon about ‘modernity,’ but they also helped contour and define

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<sup>207</sup> The Syrian colony both confirms and upends this “Mediterranean” logic; like Buenos Aires and São Paulo, New York’s “Little Syria” abutted the Italian, Greek, and Sephardic neighborhoods. But unlike its South American cognates, New York’s “Little Syria” was also adjacent Manhattan’s first Chinatown.

<sup>208</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 110; Hashimoto estimates that perhaps 41 percent of emigrants returned to the Mashriq permanently after 1921; Hashimoto, “Lebanese Population Movements,” *Lebanese in the World*, 66n.

its constituent manners and customs.”<sup>209</sup> The class anxieties and civilizations discourses of diasporic Syrians and Lebanese transmuted into Lebanese issues, as cultural baggage and a significant part of an authentic Lebanese modernity at the close of the Ottoman period.

But if (as Khater argues) the diaspora had everything to do with the construction of a Lebanese modernity, what did this mean for social action, political activism, and the development of Syrian and Lebanese nationalisms? How did bourgeois notions about “modernity,” patriotism, and the virtues of responsible citizenship play out in the *mahjar*? To what extent did the transnational, diasporic setting of these activists and intellectuals condition their political culture and activism? If the carrying and textile trades, employment networks, mutual aid societies, and the periodical press all bridged the distance between Syria’s colonies abroad and fused them into a single social field, what did this mean for Syrian politics, particularly during the period of incredible change accompanying the demise of the Ottoman Empire? The following chapters of this dissertation will investigate Syrian and Lebanese long-distance nationalisms as they emerged during and after World War I, but if nationalism was something new that emerged during the conflict, long-distance Syrian politics and activism was clearly cut from an Ottoman cloth, particularly during the second Constitutional period following the Revolution of 1908.

*“Long-Distance Ottomanism:” Transnational Ottoman Patriotism after 1908*

During World War I, collisions between emigrant nationalists, imperial powers, and the waning Ottoman government set up the patterns and possibilities that governed *mahjari* political culture through the interwar period. During the conflict, emigrant nationalists would depend on the diaspora’s social infrastructure to send aid home to Syria, contract alliances with foreign

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<sup>209</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 109.



powers, and to combat the Ottoman administration of Cemal Pasha (see Chapter 2). The late Ottoman Empire had by then developed a complicated relationship with Syrian and Lebanese subjects living in the Americas: for Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the 1890s, emigration posed a serious threat, draining the lifeblood of Syria's economy and its military assets. But for a new, "Young Turk" movement with its own exilic roots, Ottoman emigrants in the Americas presented a political constituency worth pursuing during the 1908 Revolution.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the Syrian communities in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires became upwardly mobile "capitals" of Ottoman Arab political culture. And a culture of Ottoman patriotism emerged in all three cities in the summer of 1908, when the Young Turk Revolution upset the regime of Abdul Hamid II and reestablished the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. Historians attribute the rise of constitutionalism in the greater Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to a series of sociological changes: the development of a private newspaper industry and an Ottoman Arab "public sphere," the emergence of a coherent middle class capable of voicing its political interests and expectations (expectations themselves piqued by the promises of reform emanating from the imperial government), and the success of constitutional movements in Japan, Iran, and Russia.<sup>210</sup> Paramount among these changes, though, was a new political culture that identified the state itself as a site of political contestation. In James Gelvin's words, "ideology- not dynasty- (became) the foundation of political legitimacy."<sup>211</sup> This was the beginning of mass politics in the greater Middle East and in its diasporas.

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<sup>210</sup>James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153-5. On connections between turn of the century constitutionalist movements, see Nader Sohrabi, "Global Waves, Local Actors: What the young Turks Knew about Other Revolutions and Why it Mattered," in *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 44, no. 1 (2002), 45-79.

<sup>211</sup>Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: a History*, 156.

In the *mahjar* as in Syria, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 represented a major victory for the forces of political progress, and the news was met with street festivals in Cairo,<sup>212</sup> well-attended banquets in New York City and São Paulo,<sup>213</sup> and a Syrian parade in Buenos Aires.<sup>214</sup> The events in Istanbul that summer – the reestablishment of the 1876 Ottoman Constitution, the reorganization of the imperial government, the return of exiled members of the Committee of Union and Progress Party (CUP), fresh promises of individual rights, free expression, and freedom of the press – all provided a dramatic backdrop to a frenetic period of upheaval and activism in the diaspora. In the United States, the Sultan's diplomatic corps was upended: Mundji Bey, the new Ottoman General Consul in New York quickly moved to support the Young Turk revolutionaries, while the Ottoman Ambassador in Washington, Muhammad ‘Ali bey ‘Abed, vehemently opposed the CUP’s government in favor of the Sultan Abdul Hamid II. An assortment of prominent Syrians in the New York colony formed the *Syrian American Association* (called *Jam ‘iyyat al-Ittihad al-Suri al-‘Uthmani* in Arabic, and the same organization cited in the *Dow v. United States* case above) and campaigned for Ambassador ‘Abed's censure.<sup>215</sup> The Hamidian ambassador was recalled to Istanbul for reassignment, but before he left, he delivered searing indictments against the Revolution and against “that insurrectionist Mundji Bey” to the U.S. Department of State and the American press.<sup>216</sup> The battle of the consuls lasted only three weeks, but it conditioned a new pattern of activism among Syrians in New York, a pattern that would ultimately outlive the Empire. Eager to press its diplomatic advantages, the *Syrian American Association* raised funds for the legal betterment of the colony;

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<sup>212</sup>Birgis Jumayyil, *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani wa-Lubnan al-Kabir* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Istishari li-l-‘Alam wa-l-Tawthiq al-Madrasi, 1996), 107.

<sup>213</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani: li-tadhakar Yubil al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya al-Fuddi* (New York: Matba‘at al-Huda, 1937), 21-2; Antonius Jafet., *Dhikrayyat*, 46.

<sup>214</sup>Najib Sawaya, “al-Ihtifal bi-‘Eid al-Dustur al-‘Uthmani,” *al-Kawn* 6 August 1908, 1-3.

<sup>215</sup>“Jam ‘iyyat al-Ittihad al-Suri al-‘Uthmani,” *al-Kawn* 13 August 1908, 2.

<sup>216</sup>“Akhbar Mahaliyya: Mudih al-Sihafa al-Amrikiyya li-l-Safir al-‘Uthmani,” *al-Kawn* 13 August 1908, 3.

the funding that paid for the Association to press for Syrian access to U.S. citizenship had been raised during this 1908 consular battle.<sup>217</sup>

The Ottoman Consul in New York, Mundji Bey, had only come to New York with the Revolution, and with orders from Istanbul to organize the Empire's expatriate communities there (not only the Syrians but also Armenians and Anatolian Turks) and to strive to correct US misconceptions about Istanbul's new constitutional government. In this second endeavor, the Consul understood that skilled diplomacy with the emigrants in New York would improve the Empire's international reputation. Mundji Bey's first order of business, announced just days after the Revolution, was a general amnesty to all Turkish, Armenian, and Syrian exiles accused of "political crimes" against the regime of Abdul Hamid II.<sup>218</sup> Speaking to the *New York Times*, Mundji Bey explained that "the Constitution granted in my country is not like that granted in Russia; it is like that of England and France" in that "it grants amnesty to all her political refugees. Let those who work for the good of their country return. The Government needs them."<sup>219</sup> The Consul identified some 400,000 emigrants in the United States who would benefit from the amnesty and who (he hoped) would consider returning to the Ottoman fold. His overtures raised the Syrian expectations that as transnational Ottoman citizens abroad, their political rights would be protected under the new Constitutional system.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> The start-up campaign for the Syrian American Association gathered an astounding \$ 1,829,600 and included donations from the *mahjar's* most successful families. It represented the largest fund raising campaign in the Ottoman Empire's diaspora to that point, illustrating just how popular the revolution was to the *mahjar's* elite, and just how effective the battle of the consuls was in inflaming support for it; "al-Mudar'a al-Suriyya al-'Uthmaniyya," *al-Kawn* 13 August 1908, 3.

<sup>218</sup> This general amnesty was Empire-wide, not explicit to the American *mahjar*, although Mundji Bey's office took special interest in encouraging Syrian, Armenian, and Anatolian emigrants to return to the Empire as a means of legitimating the July Revolution's liberal goals. On the amnesty, see Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 176.

<sup>219</sup> "Sultan in Danger of Losing The Throne," *New York Times*, 31 July 1908, 3.

<sup>220</sup> Mundji Bey's jurisdiction was the United States and Canada. His population estimate included Syrian, Armenian, Turkish, Albanian, and other emigrants from Ottoman domains. "Sultan in Danger of Losing The Throne," *New York Times*, 31 July 1908, 3. Despite Mundji Bey's optimism, Icil Acehan demonstrates that the amnesty was not

When the Sultan Abdul Hamid II himself saluted the Ottoman Constitution in an Istanbul ceremony in April 1909, Syrians living in New York celebrated “a victory for the Constitutional government,” in the words of Na’um Mukarzil.<sup>221</sup> Reinvigorated by the promise of democratic reform after constitutionalism’s “long slumber” under Abdul Hamid II, the Syrian community in Buenos Aires petitioned the Argentine government to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire under the CUP government.<sup>222</sup> In 1910, an Ottoman Consular Office opened in Buenos Aires, and Lebanese Druze notable Emir Emin Arslan became the first Consul General there, working alongside *Assalam* editor Alejandro Schamun.<sup>223</sup> The establishment of a regular diplomatic relations not only increased the Empire’s standing in the world of nations; it also augmented the political significance and authority of the Buenos Aires colony *vis a vis* Istanbul.

In the Syrian communities abroad, 23 July became “Constitution Day” and was vigorously celebrated with parades, festivals, and public speeches on the virtues and duties of Ottoman citizenship. In São Paulo, the cotton factories, cafes, and Syrian shops closed for the day, and Syrian food vendors set up stalls along the *Rua 25 de Marzo* to feed the society folk,

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particularly successful in encouraging return migration to Ottoman lands, and transnational articulations of Ottoman political belonging were more popular, “Reconstructing the Boundaries of Belonging: Transnationalization among Middle Eastern Immigrants in the United States,” unpublished conference presentation delivered at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 12 October 2013.

<sup>221</sup> “Satisfaction Among Exiles: Turks, Armenians, Syrians of this Country Approve Young Turk Victory,” *New York Times*, 25 April 1909, 2. It should be noted that the Sultan’s gesture came on the heels of an attempted counterrevolution in April 1909 which, while confirming the constitutional state and the CUP, brought to power an increasingly illiberal and centralist faction of the CUP, the same faction that soon alienated Syrian supporters both at home and in the diaspora. See Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 253-77.

<sup>222</sup> Stephen Hyland, ‘Arisen from Deep Slumber’: Transnational Politics and Competing Nationalisms among Syrian Immigrants in Argentina, 1900-1922,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no. 3 (2011), 548.

<sup>223</sup> Alejandro Schamun, *La Siria Nueva: Obra Histórica, Estadística y Comercial de la Colectividad Sirio-Otomana en las Repúblicas Argentina y Uruguay* (Buenos Aires: Empresa Assalam, 1917), 37. Emin Arslan would stay in office into World War I, but would make a dramatic reversal of position by 1918, joining with *al-Fatat* and Emir Faysal’s Arab nationalist movement. Between 1918 and 1920, Arslan maintained a semi-official status as the Arab Kingdom’s consul; after that, he would become a public voice for the Syrian nationalist movement as publisher of *La Nota* and later, *al-Istiqlal*; Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Identities in French Syria and Lebanon: a Transnational Dialogue with Arab Immigrants to Argentina and Brazil, 1915-1929* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007), 116-7.

intellectuals, peddlers, misbehaving children, and Brazilian onlookers who attended the event in the thousands. At the 1912 festival, the Ypiranga Cotton Factory mogul Nami Jafet delivered the keynote address, mounting the stage to give a brief history of the Ottoman Constitution: its creation by enlightened administrators in 1876, its occultation by Sultan Abdul Hamid II two years later, the flight of its principles into the diaspora (specifically to Paris, where constitutionalist exiles agitated beyond the Red sultan's reach), and its return to Istanbul after three decades of struggle. For Jafet, the three-decade struggle between a constitutionalist Ottoman patriotism (*Otomanidade*, or *Osmanlilik* in Turkish) and the imperial absolutism of Abdul Hamid yielded a worthy Revolution in 1908. What was less clear to Jafet was whether the Young Turks had succeeded in creating a new basis for ordering and administering the polyglot, multi-confessional Empire. Sympathetic to the Young Ottoman founding fathers of 1876, Jafet argued that a secular Ottoman political culture, inclusive to all of the Empire's subjects, still needed to be nurtured:

“Now, these nations [defined as Ottoman *millet*s], diverse in religion, separated by language and yet lacking in patriotic sentiment; can these nations in four years, or any infinite number of years, reach harmony and create a union like those of the British, French, or the world's other advanced peoples? Is it possible for any nation or people to reconcile, to live in concordance with peoples complete distinct and divergent in language, religions, race, and traditions? Everything is possible under the Sun, because these divisions were caused by governments past [Abdul Hamid II]. With the elimination of those causes for social disintegration comes the cessation of disunity. But now I ask you all: has this Constitution actually set down conditions that will make the divisions of the past disappear?”<sup>224</sup>

Jafet identified common Syrian grievances that by 1912 fed a public discourse critical of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress Party: the underrepresentation of Syrians and Arabic-speakers in imperial administration, checks against Mount Lebanon's administrative autonomy,

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<sup>224</sup> Nami Jafet, “A Constituição Otomana: Discurso Proferido em 23 de Julho de 1912,” in *Ensaio e Discursos*, trans. Taufik Daúd Kurban (Arabic to Portuguese), (São Paulo: SP Editura, 1947), 238.

ongoing concerns about conscription of Syrians into the Ottoman military as it campaigned in the Balkans, each of these complaints flying in the face of constitutionally guaranteed protections codified only four years prior. Jafet argued that constitutional rule was an imminently fragile thing, demanding vigilance from Ottoman citizens as well as the nurturance of a shared patriotism to undermine pervasive ethnic, religious, and political divisions:

“The Constitution guarantees the unity and life of the nation. We struggle, then, for its conservation, in order to ensure a straight and true path for ourselves; a life of ease; a life of hope. The thick clouds we see forming in the Ottoman sky are made up of ignorance, remnants of the ancient regime of subsistence and submission. Let us disarticulate these clouds with breaths of knowledge and harmony.”<sup>225</sup>

But even as Jafet critiqued the ruling Committee of Union and Progress Party, and even as he addressed demands for Syrian autonomy, his 1912 Constitution Day speech addressed the Syrians of São Paulo as an Ottoman community, with Ottoman origins and political obligations to the Empire in Istanbul. Just two years later, with the Empire’s entry into World War I, a few of the Syrian intellectuals present that day would begin to address “the nation” as an entity distinct from the Empire; by mid-1916, many more would define their nation in direct opposition to the Ottoman government under the CUP, Nami Jafet among them. During the War, the Syrian colony on *Rua 25 de Marzo* would become a major site for nationalist political activism. But in 1912, none in the *mahjar* envisioned a Syrian future beyond an Ottoman imperial framework. Jafet’s Constitution Day speech closed not with a vision of an Empire on the brink of War but rather on the cusp of a cultural renaissance: “Ottomans! Know that our love of country should be the pavilion under which we will gather and unite. Join me here, join me in patriotism, in Ottomanism (*otomanidade*); let us shout together: love live the Constitution! Long live the

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<sup>225</sup> Jafet, “A Constituição Otomana,” 246-7.

Ottoman nation (*viva a pátria otomana*)!”<sup>226</sup> The annual gatherings of 23 July persisted in Syria São Paulo, even after the demise of the Empire and Syria’s occupation by the French. In the years to follow, Constitution Day metamorphosed into a day of nostalgia, a day of national mourning, and by the late 1920s, a day of nationalist demands for Independence.

This chapter has situated the emergence of three Syrian “colonies” in the Atlantic port cities of New York City, São Paulo and Buenos Aires, placing them within three layered sets of context: the global experience of late nineteenth century economic integration and mass labor migration; the development of transnational networks of migration, commerce, and print culture that joined all three colonies and their homeland within a shared discursive system; and the local experiences of Syrian immigrants in each colony seeking to fit themselves into the economic rhythms of their adopted countries. Although attitudes towards immigration varied considerably between Brazil, Argentina, and the United States, in the late nineteenth century a remarkable convergence of ideas linking the selective settlement of immigrant labor to national progress offered both economic and symbolic opportunities to Syrian migrants. In terms of economics, the Syrians maintained a secondary commercial economy that, while not in line with the stated objectives of America’s settler states (all three saw the ideal immigrant as an agricultural settler or barring that, an industrial wage worker), provided needed services to an expanding export-driven Atlantic economy. In terms of symbols, the Syrians fit themselves into the social narratives of the settler state by conforming to the language of the colonial: the Syrian ethnic neighborhoods became “colonies,” and Syrian sojourners became “settlers.”

At the same time, imagining the Syrian diaspora as a collection of colonies bore significant implications for their ongoing relationship with the homeland, in particular, the

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<sup>226</sup> Jafet, “A Constituição Otomana,” 247.

expectation that Syrians abroad were to remain active participants in the political life of the Ottoman Empire as “long-distance Ottomans.” Mundji Bey’s efforts to engage the Syrian diaspora after 1908 demonstrate that the constitutionalists of the Young Turk party saw emigrants as an important population with continuing ties of obligation to the Ottoman state. Mundji Bey’s strategy of enticing return migration was perhaps never as successful as he hoped it would be, but it belies a shifting attitude towards Ottomans abroad, casting them not merely as subjects to be moved by the imperium at will (as in the days of the *sürgün*),<sup>227</sup> but as transnational citizens who (for the moment)<sup>228</sup> interacted with the Ottoman state at will. With the eruption of World War I in 1914, a series of competing nationalist movements would emerge in the diaspora, each similarly invoking the language of a shared political culture and calling on the obligations of Syria’s “colonies” abroad to combat the Ottoman state, not because of an “awakened” ethnic consciousness as Arabs, but because of the perceived failure of the Committee of Union and Progress to live up to the principles of the 1908 Constitution.

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<sup>227</sup> Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 18.

<sup>228</sup> It should also be noted that although Mundji Bey appealed to Ottomans abroad as citizens in 1908, enticements like the amnesty were one way of managing Ottoman migration, and one way among others pursued concurrently. During the same period, the CUP government appealed to the U.S. government to deny Syrian emigrants the right to naturalization; they also placed new restrictions on eastern Mediterranean ports and passed new passport legislation to restrict mass migrations out from the Levant. Akarlı, “Ottoman Attitudes Towards Lebanese Emigration, 1885-1910,” *Lebanese in the World*, 110.



## CHAPTER 2: TRANSNATIONAL MODES AND MEDIA: THE SYRIAN PRESS IN THE MAHJAR AND EMIGRANT POLITICAL ACTIVISM DURING WORLD WAR I

“The sentiments of honor and loyalty... are incompatible with these individuals who sold their profession... to the highest bidder. Hirelings of the foreigners, they tried to inculcate the inexperienced youth with the same subversive ideas that they had entertained.”

- Jamal Pasha on Syria's Journalists, 1916.<sup>229</sup>

On 6 May 1916, the military government of Jamal Pasha, “the bloodletter,” convicted some forty Syrian journalists and intellectuals of treason. Using documents seized from the abandoned French Consular Office in Beirut, the Ottoman government demonstrated that prominent members of Syria's Decentralization movement had colluded with France to end Turkish rule in Syria and Lebanon. The condemned shared several attributes: they were reformers who had called for greater Arab participation in imperial administration; they were journalists and newspaper editors who participated in the *nahda*; and lastly, they each had connections to the Syrian diaspora. Such links to Syrian communities in Cairo, Paris, and the Americas spared some of the condemned their lives. Many fled during the first months of World War I, and could only be convicted in absentia.<sup>230</sup>

Jamal Pasha hanged twenty one “traitors” in Beirut and Damascus, in a public demonstration of the high costs of talking reform.<sup>231</sup> Their editors executed, the presses at

<sup>229</sup> Jamal Pasha, *La vérité sur la question syrienne* (Istanbul: Imprimerie Tanine, 1916), 40.

<sup>230</sup> Jamal Pasha laid out a series of documents seized by the Fourth Regiment from the abandoned French Consul in Beirut. Over forty journalists with diasporic ties were convicted of treason for their connections to *Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya*. Among them: ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Uraisi, Ahmad Tabbara, Shukri al-‘Asali, Khalil Zeine, and Yusuf Hani, all executed in May 1916; *La vérité sur la question syrienne*, 158-168. Among those convicted by who escaped execution: Ayyub Tabet (in New York City), Rizkallah Arcache (Cairo), Michel Nakhle (Alexandria), and Petro Trad; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Guerre 1914-1918, Turquie (henceforth MAE, T), LeFevre-Pontalis to Briand, Cairo, 12 April 1916. Antoine Hokayem, Daad Bou Malhab ‘Atallah, and Jean Charaf, *Documents diplomatiques Français relatifs à l'histoire du Liban et de la Syrie à l'époque du mandat, Vol. 1: Le Démantèlement de l'Empire Ottoman et les préludes du mandat* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2003), 132-133.

<sup>231</sup> In addition to the twenty one killed on 6 May 1916 (fourteen in Beirut, seven in Damascus), Ami Ayalon

Ahmed Tabbara's *al-Ittihad al-'Uthmani*, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi's *al-Hadara*, and the Khazin brothers' *al-Arz* closed quietly. Only Muhammad Kurd Ali's pro-Ottoman *al-Muqtabas* remained.<sup>232</sup> The following month, a disastrous famine visited the Mountain, depleting entire villages of their populations. Death warrants remained on the books for many of Syria's intellectuals, who continued to combat the Ottoman state from New York City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Paris, and Cairo.

The greatest irony of this moment is that although Jamal Pasha had correctly identified the Syrian press as a political force connected to the diaspora, he failed to consider the Reform movement's largely Ottomanist outlook. The 1913 Syrian Congress in Paris brought together reformers from *Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya*, the Beirut Reform Society, *al-Fatat*, and other parties comprised chiefly of journalists from Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, Alexandria, and New York City. Having used the diaspora's press to reach consensus, the Congress laid out its platform: immediate administrative reform, greater Arab participation in local affairs, and the protection of political rights (including those in the diaspora) within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>233</sup> Istanbul sent its own delegate, who reported that these resolutions would assist in negotiations between the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter C.U.P.) and Arab reformers.

Instead of reform, the following months brought war. The empire entered World War I, and Jamal Pasha arrived in Syria, placing it under military occupation by 1915. He immediately stepped up censorship over Syria's press, instituting bans on diasporic periodicals, closing printing houses, harassing and even executing journalists.<sup>234</sup> The clampdown alienated the

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enumerates eleven additional executions of journalists convicted off treason in August 1915; Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 71.

<sup>232</sup> Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press), 71-3.

<sup>233</sup> *Watha'iq al-Mu'tamar al-'Arabi al-Awwal 1913* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha, 1980), 46-8, 113-4.

<sup>234</sup> Henry Melki, *al-Shihafa al-'Arabiyya fi-l-Mahjar: wa-'Alaqtuha bi-l-Adab al-Mahjari* (Beirut: Dar al-Sharq al-Awsat li-l-Taba' wa-l-Nashr, 1998), 37.

C.U.P's former partners in the *mahjar*. By 1916, activists abroad once associated with the Syrian Reform movement mourned their dying homeland, and called for its emancipation from the “Turkish yoke” (*nīr al-atrāk*) for the first time. In the struggle for Independence, the *mahjar* became a critical front where activists waged battles in the press.

This chapter outlines the story of transnational political activism in the Syrian *mahjar*, paying special attention to the myriad ways that the Arabic language press in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States served the Independence project. It documents the emergence of a Syrian and Lebanese reform movement in the *mahjar* after 1909, and links the proliferation of reformist political parties to networks of journalists and periodicals across transnational space. It argues that as the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, policies adopted by the Ottoman government—conscription, press censorship, surveillance of Syrian journalists and intellectuals, and the repression of Syria’s reform parties—drew criticism from Syrian activists living abroad. By 1916, Jemal Pasha’s mass hanging of “treasonist” activists and the mounting famine in Mount Lebanon had alienated Syrian and Lebanese activists abroad, who began calling for independence from (and not reform within) the Ottoman Empire.

During the War, the *mahjari* press presented diasporic Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalist political parties with a focal point for addressing, defining, and particularly *representing* the nation. Although each party had distinct, competing visions for a post-Ottoman Syria (or Lebanon), they mirrored one another in significant ways, the most consequential of which was that they each sought the assistance of one or more Entente Powers as the guarantors of the nation. This chapter argues that ultimately, this strategy led both the Syrian and Lebanese nationalist movements into collaboration with the Great Powers, and most notably the French. In the diaspora, the periodical press became fertile ground for the politics of nationalist public

opinion; in the pages of competing political newspapers, new fissures emerged between activists who fundamentally disagreed over Syria's future and the place of Lebanon within (or apart from) it. By 1919 the French Foreign Ministry, eager to delegitimize the Arab nationalist government emerging under the Hashimite Emir Faysal, used its connections to activist communities in the *mahjar* to push for a French Mandate over all of Syria and Lebanon.

*Transnational Media: Syrian Publishing Houses and the Varieties of the Press*

As the diaspora's major print capitals, Syrian publishing houses in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and New York City comprised critical sites for public opinion and nationalist activism during the War. Beyond newspapers, publishers produced nationalist propaganda for the Syrian reading public.<sup>235</sup> Political parties used such media to disseminate open letters, pamphlets, and books. These texts were printed in Arabic, French, English, Portuguese, and Spanish for both Arab and foreign audiences. Their content evolved during the conflict, and the *mahjar*'s political culture resembled an ongoing discussion between the activists around the world.

Publishing houses also provided new social spaces oriented towards patriotic politics and middle-class activism. They had their own subscription-based libraries, printing dime novels, translations of European literature, biographies, political poetry, and language primers.<sup>236</sup> They often featured reading rooms for the oration and performance of texts; this mirrored similar institutions in Beirut, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Cairo.<sup>237</sup> Some engaged in everyday printing, producing stationary and letterhead for local Syrian businesses. Such measures offset the cost of producing a newspaper.<sup>238</sup> Most importantly, the *mahjar*'s publishing houses founded their own

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<sup>235</sup> See Comité Central Syrien's *La Syrie devant la Conférence*, (Paris: s.p., 1919); Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani, *Lubnan Ba'd al-Harb* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Ma'ruf, 1919).

<sup>236</sup> See, for example, "Maktabat Mirat al-Gharb," *Mirat al-Gharb*, 3 January 1919, 6; "Maktabat al-Huda," *al-Huda*, 6 January 1916, 6.

<sup>237</sup> Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 99-102; Ami Ayalon, "Accessing without Buying: Libraries, Clubs, Reading Rooms," *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 87-92.

<sup>238</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, "Jaridat al-Huda al-Yawmiyya wa-Matba'atiha," in Ya'qub Rifa'il, *al-Shawā'ir al-Sharīfa*,

literary societies and book clubs. Meeting weekly to discuss poetry, history, and politics, these fraternities offered young men a social outlet as well as a worldview that carried patriotic and even nationalist content. Many such groups discussed in this chapter-- the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*, the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*, and the *Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Watani*-- began as fraternities attached to publishing houses.

During World War I, political, intellectual, and activist networks cohered around their respective newspaper presses. In such a setting, the journalism industry itself became a space where an emerging Syrian and Lebanese middle class abroad asserted its primacy in political debates. Newspapers were simultaneously sites of contest and patronage: in New York City, Na'um Mukarzil subsidized Lebanese writers in his Arabic daily *al-Huda*, a paper officially linked to his own political committee *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*. For aspiring young writers, membership in a club like the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* and access to the press came hand in hand; participating in the politics of patriotism hinged on both aspects. In the end, newspapers were greater than the output of their individual presses; they created their own intellectual gravity and governed both political discourse and nationalist activism.

The *mahjar's* press was an important political institution which fostered transnational networks across the diaspora. As such, it facilitated the continuous circulation of intellectuals, activists, and professionals. Readers across continents could order issues of *al-Huda*, *al-Sa'ih*, or *Abu al-Hawl* remotely through mail-order subscription, and party activists brought copies with them as they moved across the *mahjar*. Their peripatetic movements established a circuit that enabled activism across the *mahjar*. The transnational nature of this press also reflected in the *mahjar's* economy: newspapers like Sallum Mukarzil's *al-Majalla al-Suriyya al-Amirkiyya* in

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(New York: *Matb'at al-Huda*, 1924), 86-106.

New York combined political commentary with descriptions of employment markets, economic conditions, and prices for items like cotton, coffee, cloth, tobacco, and 'araq.<sup>239</sup>

As transient activists and journalists imagined Syrian and Lebanese communities into existence, the diaspora's newspapers transformed them into epicenters for nationalist politics. But, unlike Anderson's imagined communities, the process by which the periodical press enabled patriotic nationalism was anything but consensual. Rather, in the *mahjar* the press was a place of semiotic contest, a place where the diaspora's activists variously became "Syrian" or "Lebanese" by engaging in discursive warfare for the right to define and represent the community abroad. National symbols, historical narratives, and language became rhetorical munitions within a "political and cultural minefield" where Syrians in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States competed for access to the diaspora's collective voice.<sup>240</sup>

If the press created new political spaces, it also constrained emigrant agency, channeling it towards specific a political praxis.<sup>241</sup> Newspapers empowered a transnational Syrian middle class which then pressed its claims to representative legitimacy in international fora. At the same time, the press provided structures which governed Syrian activism in important ways. First, as continued out-migration dispersed the Syrian reading public, periodicals and political parties needed to maintain active networks of support and information across a widening transnational space. Second, this reading public's middle-class identity influenced how politics functioned: committee-based activism, complete with a faith in "public opinion" and the power of petition took center stage over ideological or mass party activism. Emigrant activists relied on

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<sup>239</sup> On Syrian and Lebanese ethnic economies, see John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Newliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 23-45.

<sup>240</sup> Ted Swedenburg and Smadar Lavie, *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 12-4.

<sup>241</sup> See Andrew Arsan, "'This is the Age of Associations:' Committees, Petitions, and the Roots of Interwar Middle Eastern Internationalism," *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 2 (2012); 181.

newspapers to popularize political viewpoints and enervate the diasporic public into supporting new visions of the homeland as a matter of patriotic duty. If the periodical press helped create new notions of community among the transnational reading public, the production of newspapers and the journalist's trade also governed what types of political action emigrant nationalists engaged in. For nationalist personalities (who were also newspaper editors), political authority and relevance was attained by grabbing the attention of the *mahjar*'s readership and channeling Syrian public opinion (itself a new political force) towards nationalist visions of the homeland.

*The Press in the Mahjar as Transnational Archive*

As a body of sources, the *mahjari* press gets short shrift in historiographies of interwar Syria and Lebanon in favor of colonial documents. A practical reason for this stems from how historians frame Middle Eastern history. Within the Area Studies framework popularized by the postwar American academy, studies of the region have focused on the relationship between territorially defined nation-states and the societies they produce. Mobile peoples: nomads, migrant laborers, or emigrants, fit only problematically within such a perspective, not least because as migrants, they undermine the "methodological nationalism" which presumes the immutability and inviolability of the homogenous nation-state.<sup>242</sup> The states of Syria and Lebanon emerged only after World War I, on maps drawn by European powers seeking an amiable colonial solution for the post-Ottoman Levant. The *mahjar* and its activists played a complicated role in the construction of this geography, but "landlocked" methodological lenses typical of Area Studies presume salt water to be more boundary than conduit for political change.<sup>243</sup> This chapter takes the opposite tack, arguing that there is no place better suited to

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<sup>242</sup> Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences," *Global Networks* 2, no. 4 (2002): 301-3.

<sup>243</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, "Becoming 'Syrian' in America: a Global Geography of Ethnicity and Nation," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 299-301.

explore the utility of transnational modes of inquiry than in the history of nationalism. Emigrants participated in drawing the borders, building the states, and defining the nations of Syria and Lebanon. Like other nations with sizable diasporas, patriotic politics and nationalist ideas from the *mahjar* figured among the most consequential of remittances during the War.

Because political parties, charitable organizations, and intellectual clubs printed their minutiae in the press, these periodicals provide an inside look into the values, culture, and politics of the *mahjar*. The meeting minutes, election results, propaganda, and local news printed in the press provide a story of Syrian life abroad that is simply not accounted for in either Ottoman and French records. Activist groups are particularly obscured because they operated clandestinely and escaped government detection.<sup>244</sup> The press delivers empirically by recording political goings-on, transnational communications, and intellectual discourses. At the same time, the press presents its own blind spots that need accounting for. The *mahjar*'s newspapers were widely distributed and poorly preserved, creating an issue of survivability that requires a creative methodology. Although New York papers *al-Huda*, *Mirat al-Gharb*, *al-Bayan*, and *al-Sa'ih* maintained complete archives, other titles—*al-Fara'id* (Buenos Aires), *al-Zaman* (Buenos Aires), and *Abu al-Hawl* (São Paulo)—have left only a few issues scattered around the world. However, the emergence of transnational Syrian press syndicates during the War allowed for the reproduction of important news stories, making it possible to read editorials by Syrians in Egypt, Argentina, or Brazil by reading the New York papers. Similarly, even where newspapers have not survived, supplemental materials produced by these publishing houses have. Propaganda, poetry, and personal narratives remain and are more successfully preserved in research libraries.

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<sup>244</sup> Tanyss Carol Ludescher, "*The Orient is Ill*": *Kahlil Gibran and the Politics of Nationalism in the New York Syrian Colony, 1908-1920* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2010).



In this spirit, the following pages explore the press's imbrication with Syrian and Lebanese nationalist activism during World War I. Following on the heels of a familiar story: the emergence of the Syrian Reform movement, its transformation into distinct and competing Arab, Syrian, and Lebanese nationalisms, and subsequent splintering of activist groups in 1919, a fresh look at this history from the diaspora's perspective reveals how the collaborations and competitions of Syrian and Lebanese activists abroad influenced politics at home.

*The Syrian Press Abroad: From Reform to Nationalism*

From its inception in 1909, the Syrian Reform movement had close ties to the diaspora, and nearly all of its early leaders were newspapermen. The printing profession reflected the values of a new middle class in Syria. Raised on the principles of the nineteenth century *nahda*, these men were educated, urban, and liberal in their attitudes concerning political participation. They were well read in the Arabic classics as well as in European sociology, political philosophy, and history. In the Syrian press in Egypt, for example, the editors of *al-Hilal*, *al-Ahram*, *al-Muqtataf*, and *al-Muqattam* enthusiastically translated pieces by Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, and T. S. Carlyle into Arabic, and encouraged their readers to purchase full length copies from their respective publishing houses.<sup>245</sup> Reading such materials provided more than recreation; it became a marker of class identity, and a prerequisite to participating in Syrian and Lebanese social discourse in the late Ottoman context. In Cairo, young Syrian and Lebanese members of reading rooms and publishing houses supported Ottoman constitutionalism under the banner of the Young Turks. In July 1908, Syrians in Cairo held a street festival in honor of the C.U.P, and touting the revolution as the beginning of an awaited Ottoman constitutional flowering and a realization of the ethos of *al-nahda*.<sup>246</sup> The heady feeling would not last, and in

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<sup>245</sup> Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 31.

<sup>246</sup> Birjis Faris Jumayyil, *Hizb al-Ittiḥad al-Lubnani wa-Lubnan al-Kabir* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Istishari li-l-'Alam wa-l-Tawthiq al-Madrasi, 1996), 100; Sallum Mukarzil's discussion of the C.U.P. mirrors this initial enthusiasm,

1909 a second coup within the C.U.P. brought a centralist faction to power under Enver, Talat, and Jamal Pasha and changed the ruling regime's focus. This alienated Syrian intellectuals, and in Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus, new questions about whether the new Ottoman government would protect Arab local interests and autonomy emerged.

The diaspora's first reform party, Cairo's *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* [the Lebanese Union Party, also known as *l'Alliance Libanaise*] emerged from a falling out between the Syrians of Cairo and Lebanese *mutasarrif* Yusuf Franco Pasha. In 1909, Syrian emigrant publishers Yusuf Sawda and Antun al-Jumayyil (who wrote for Beirut's *al-Bashir*, and Cairo's *al-Ahram* and *al-Zuhur*)<sup>247</sup> arrived in Mount Lebanon to investigate recent rumblings that the C.U.P. planned to alter Lebanon's administrative status. Rumors that 1864's *Règlement Organique* would be discarded in favor of direct imperial control caused controversy among Syrians living in Cairo and Alexandria, who advocated for the extension of administrative autonomy for their homeland, which they defined as Mount Lebanon and the *wilaya* of Beirut. Arriving at Franco Pasha's office, al-Jumayyil and Sawda presented their case for autonomy. They were told, "you must understand that we are an Ottoman *wilaya*, and that the Lebanese must also assume this status."<sup>248</sup> Yusuf Sawda recalled storming out of the *mutasarrif*'s office, leaving al-Jumayyil to awkwardly take his leave with grace. The pair returned to Cairo, and in December 1909 convened with the colony's most prominent intellectuals, newspaper editors, and professionals. The *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* emerged with two headquarters: in Cairo under Iskandar 'Ammun, Daud Barakat (*al-Ahram*), and Antun al-Jumayyil, and in Alexandria under Yusuf

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Sallum Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani: li-tidhkar yubil al-Nahḍa al-Lubnaniyya al-Faḍi, 1911-1936* (New York: Matba'at al-Huda, 1936), 21-4. Tawfik Duoun's history of Syrians in Brazil says same, "Os Turcos," *A Emigração Sirio-Libanesa as Terras de Promissão* (São Paulo: Confissões Indiscricões, 1944), 62-8.

<sup>247</sup> Jumayyil, *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani wa-Lubnan al-Kabir*, 111.

<sup>248</sup> Yusuf Sawda, *Fi-Sabil al-Istiqlal*, (Beirut: Dar al-Rihani, 1967), 23-4.

Sawda.<sup>249</sup> This was not an ideological political party, but instead a pragmatic political committee that represented a Syrian and Lebanese urban professional class abroad. Because the *Ittihad Lubnani* was essentially a syndicate representing fluid, sometimes inchoate political interests, the organization never became a mass political party. The Egyptian branch's membership peaked at 2,000 by 1919; more common for the *mahjar* were smaller pockets of several dozen professionals, writers, and functionaries representing *Ittihad Lubnani* locally.<sup>250</sup> The organization's agenda was to protect Mount Lebanon's administrative privileges [*imtiyazat idariyya*] as outlined by the *Règlement Organique* of 1864, to support the extension of local rights and home-rule, and to establish Arabic as the administrative language.<sup>251</sup> As such, the *Ittihad Lubnani* was the first emigrant party to articulate a reformist, decentralization platform; it later formed the nucleus of the *Hizb al-Lamarkaziya* [Decentralization Party] in 1912.<sup>252</sup>

*Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* set the tone for organizing across the *mahjar*, and parties which came after mirrored its organizational structure. First, the *Ittihad Lubnani*'s leadership valued and nurtured links with the press, which it saw as the pathway for developing and domesticating Syrian public opinion. The party's executive committee was itself made up of journalists: Antun al-Jumayyil (*al-Ahram*), Daud Barakat (*al-Ahram*), Khayrallah Khayrallah (*al-Hurriya*), Iskandar and Daud 'Ammun (*al-Mahrusa*), Yusuf Sawda, and Auguste Adib Pasha. These men commanded editorial opinion in the *mahjar*, and they used this hold over the press to publicize the Decentralization question from 1909 until the First Syrian Congress of

<sup>249</sup> Jumayyil, *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani wa-Lubnan al-Kabir*, 107.

<sup>250</sup> Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, Mandat, Syrie-Liban (henceforth AD, SL), Report on l'Alliance Libanaise, Cairo, 12 January 1919. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 463.

<sup>251</sup> Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani, "Ta'sis al-Ittihad al-Lubnani," in *al-Ittihad al-Lubnani fi-l-Qatr al-Masri wa-l-Mas'ila al-Lubnaniyya*, (Cairo: Matba'at al-Ma'ruf, s.d.), 3-5.

<sup>252</sup> One of *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*'s co-founders (and during the War, president), Iskandar 'Ammun, was simultaneously the vice president of *al-Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya*. From Paris, Khayrallah Khayrallah was also an important ally of the Decentralization Party; see Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 211-2.

1913. Additionally, the *Ittihad Lubnani*'s leadership was itself transnational: Syrian writer Khayrallah Khayrallah founded a chapter in Paris in 1909, while Naʿum Mukarzil (*al-Huda*) was a close affiliate in New York.<sup>253</sup> By 1912, the *Ittihad Lubnani* also had client branches operating in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mendoza (Argentina), New York City, and Boston.

Because the *Ittihad Lubnani* commanded the *mahjar*'s intellectual space, the group easily publicized its agenda without taking on additional financial burdens. It maintained no regular treasury, and rather than fundraising, the executive committee simply reached out to partners in the Americas and their publishing houses. Professional and political partnerships emerged simultaneously in this context, and in more remote places in the *mahjar*, publishers and journalists had everything to gain from joining *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*: fodder from Cairo's most respected newspaper and access to party structures and activist networks. In effect, the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* created the *mahjar*'s first informal media syndicate, a network that crossed continents but was exclusive to *Ittihad* members.<sup>254</sup>

In New York City, *al-Huda* owner Naʿum Mukarzil served as *Ittihad Lubnani*'s closest American partner. Freike-born and Jesuit-educated, Mukarzil had himself lived in Cairo before emigrating to the United States with his brother Sallum in 1890.<sup>255</sup> In New York City, the Mukarzil brothers founded several publications which drew heavily on material written in Cairo: *al-ʿAsr*, *al-ʿAlam al-Jadid*, and *al-Huda*, which became one of New York's most successful Arabic-language dailies by 1905.<sup>256</sup> In 1910, Sallum Mukarzil developed the first Arabic wax linotype machine which made small-scale printing inexpensive and widely available in the

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<sup>253</sup> Jumayyil, *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani wa-Lubnan al-Kabir*, 109-115.

<sup>254</sup> ʿAli Hamiya, *al-ʿAllama wa-l-Duktur Khalil Saʿadeh: Siratuhu wa-aʿmaluh, 1857-1934* (Beirut: al-Furat li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawziʿ, 2007), 129.

<sup>255</sup> Mary Mukarzil, *Al-Hoda 1898-1968: The Story of Lebanon and its Emigrants as Taken from the Newspaper al-Hoda* (New York: al-Hoda Press, 1968), 1-5.

<sup>256</sup> Rafaʿil, *al-Shawaʿir al-Sharifa*, 95-7.

*mahjar*.<sup>257</sup> *al-Huda* adopted the technology and expanded its operations beyond newspapers, printing books, translations, stationary, and propaganda, which were featured in its Brooklyn library.<sup>258</sup> In 1911, Mukarzil established his own political party. Called *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* [called the Lebanon League of Progress in its English writings], the organization began as a reform party linked to the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*. And like the *Ittihad Lubnani*, it later championed Lebanese independence from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>259</sup>



Figure 3: *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*'s Executive Committee in 1913. This photo taken to commemorate Mukarzil's attendance at the First Syrian Congress in Paris that June. Na'um Mukarzil seated, second from right. Ibrahim Najjar seated at Mukarzil's left. Source: Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, 12.

The *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* espoused a political outlook Mukarzil had already popularized in the press. Inspired by the nineteenth-century *nahda* and closely affiliated with the Decentralization movement,<sup>260</sup> the *Nahda Lubnaniyya*'s original purpose was the retention of Lebanon's administrative privileges within an Ottoman context.<sup>261</sup> Mukarzil's

<sup>257</sup> Mukarzil, *al-Hoda 1898-1968*, 2.

<sup>258</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, "Jaridat al-Huda al-Yawmiyya wa-Matba'atiha," in Rafa'il, *al-Shawa'ir al-Sharifa*, 86-106.

<sup>259</sup> The Khazin brothers (*al-Arz* newspaper) founded the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*'s Beirut branch in 1912. Both were executed for their involvement in May 1916; "al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya," *Al-Tahalluf al-Lubnani* (Buenos Aires), 23 January 1920, 21-23.

<sup>260</sup> Links between Mukarzil's *Nahda Lubnaniyya* and the Cairo *Ittihad Lubnani* were so dense that many struggled to distinguish between them. Jamal Pasha mistook Mukarzil for an *Ittihad* agent in 1916's *La vérité sur la question syrienne*, 41. The two groups considered themselves two factions within a single movement; the *Ittihad Lubnani* refers to Mukarzil as its man in New York in its WWI pamphlet *al-Ittihad al-Lubnani fi-l-Qatr al-Masri*, 5.

<sup>261</sup> Na'um Mukarzil, "Bayan al-Qasad," *al-Huda*, 14 August 1911, 3.

approach mirrored that of the *Ittihad Lubnani*, save one major exception: the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* lobbied Ottoman authorities but also sought Western partners to leverage claims against Istanbul. Mukarzil cultivated alliances with French policymakers in particular, and he saw France as the Lebanon's natural guarantor for autonomy and independence.<sup>262</sup> This distinguished Mukarzil from his compatriots in the *Ittihad Lubnani*, who avoided direct collusion with the French, British, or other foreign powers. Mukarzil had no such scruples; he was amused when the Ottoman government denounced his group as “French spies, who have penetrated everywhere and have mingled with all (political) currents as informers to the Government in Paris.”<sup>263</sup>

Despite important differences in perspective, Mukarzil's *Nahda Lubnaniyya* remained an important partner to the *Ittihad Lubnani*, and this closeness is reflected in the party's organizational structure. Like the *Ittihad*, the *Nahda Lubnaniyya*'s leadership was transnational and made up largely of journalists. As a political organization, the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* operated in several places at once, bringing together Syrians and Lebanese across a transnational, diasporic space. Mukarzil depended on his own professional contacts in establishing satellite chapters across the Americas. He leaned especially on *al-Huda*'s Istanbul correspondent, Ibrahim al-Najjar, who spent most of his time on steamships shuttling between Istanbul, Paris, Cairo, and New York between 1908 and 1913. al-Najjar's work as *al-Huda*'s correspondent brought him in touch with prominent Ottoman figures like Yusuf Franco Pasha and prominent Syrian emigrés like Khayrallah Khayrallah and Shukri Ghanim, who introduced him to French diplomats like Raymond Poincaré and Jean Gout.<sup>264</sup> In 1912, al-Najjar and Shukri Ghanim founded *Nahda Lubnaniyya*'s Paris chapter. He simultaneously corresponded with journalists in São Paulo, most

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<sup>262</sup> Mukarzil, *Kitab al-Lubnani*, 47.

<sup>263</sup> Jamal Pasha, *La vérité sur la question syrienne*, 43. Founder Na‘um Mukarzil himself escaped sentencing.

<sup>264</sup> Mukarzil, *Kitab al-Lubnani*, 45-6, 55.

notably Shukri al-Khuri, the controversial editor of the Francophile daily, *Abu al-Hawl*. In 1912, al-Khuri opened Brazil's first chapter of the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubaniyya* with a group of other Syrian immigrant journalists.<sup>265</sup> By 1914, the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* had twenty-nine active satellites operating across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, and Costa Rica, as well as in Paris and Istanbul.<sup>266</sup> Ibrahim al-Najjar's movements traced the lines of the Syrian newspaper circuit; his status as a journalist gained him access to the *mahjar*'s most important personalities and supplied him with a ready route along the diaspora intellectual geography.

The *Nahda Lubnaniyya* also mirrored the *Ittihad Lubnani* in the way it collected and distributed funding. The membership's modest annual dues were maintained in the Faour Bank in Brooklyn, where Doumit and Daniel Faour (both *Nahda* members) maintained the books. But the party only collected larger sources of revenue when a project was identified, a strategy that lent the organization the flexibility to raise money across international borders informally, making them less vulnerable to foreign interference.<sup>267</sup> Such flexibility brought the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* vitality, but it also brought conflict. Sometimes satellite chapters opposed Na'um Mukarzil's political designs, and Mukarzil himself was not known for compromise. Disagreements over Mount Lebanon's future bubbled over during the War, most dramatically in Paris where a serious disagreement between Mukarzil and Shukri Ghanim led the latter to break ties with the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* completely. However, the *Nahda Lubnaniyya*'s early efforts were directed against C.U.P. centralism and towards French assistance, positions flexible enough to bring disparate personalities like Mukarzil and Ghanim into close collaboration.

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<sup>265</sup> Maria Narbona identifies As'ad Bishara, Antun Jabbara, and As'ad Bitar as al-Khuri's cofounders in 1912, *The Development of Nationalist Ideologies in French Syria and Lebanon* (Doctoral Dissertation : University of California Santa Barbara, 2007), 109. By 1914, a complete executive committee had formed, comprising Mansur al-Khuri, Shukri al-Bakhash, Wadi' Abboud, Wadi' Abi Samra, Na'um Farhat, Ayyub al-Khuri, and Salim 'Aql, *al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* pamphlet, September 29, 1914, 2-3.

<sup>266</sup> Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, 44-5.

<sup>267</sup> Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, 35-37.



World War I's beginning in 1914 changed everything in the Syrian *mahjar*, and the *Ittihad Lubnani*'s concerns shifted as well. As the Ottoman government abrogated and concluded capitulations treaties with Western Powers, Mount Lebanon's 1864 *Règlement Organique* was among those left on the cutting room floor.<sup>268</sup> In response, the *Ittihad Lubnani* altered its official stance towards the Ottoman state, changing its Constitution to state that the party would “solicit the absolute Independence of Lebanon, within its natural boundaries (*ḥudūd ṭabīʿiyya*), under the Protection of the Powers.”<sup>269</sup> The *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* transformed from a reform party to a nationalist organization. Soon after declarations of independence rang out from Lebanese, Syrian, and Arab nationalist groups in the *mahjar*'s newspapers. In Brazil, *Nahda Lubnaniyya* leader Shukri al-Khuri's image appeared on a party circular. Declaring war on the Ottoman state,

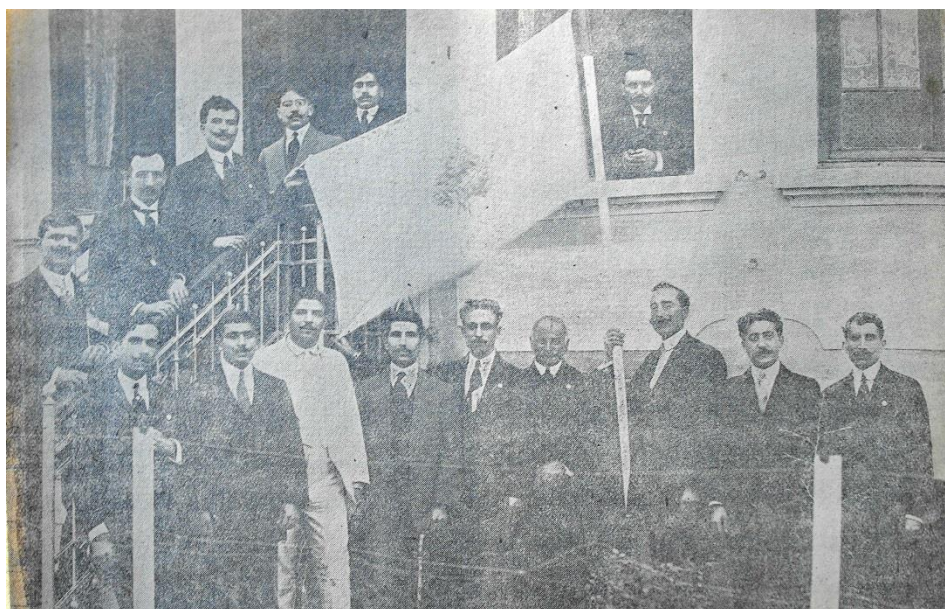


Figure 4: the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* of São Paulo declares its support for Lebanese independence from the Ottoman Empire, 1914. The party's president, *Abu al-Hawl* editor Shukri al-Khuri, appears in the window. Co-founder Shukri Bakhsh in first row, second from right. Source: *al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* Pamphlet, 29 September 1914, 3.

<sup>268</sup> Syrian decentralists, the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*, and other reformers saw the abrogation of the *Règlement* as an unambiguous refusal by the ruling CUP to recognize the autonomy of Mount Lebanon. But although this document was abrogated in 1914, M. Talha Çiçek argues that the CUP maintained aspects of Mount Lebanon's administrative autonomy, even under the increasingly centralist government of Cemal Pasha. See M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate during World War I, 1914-1917* (London: Routledge, 2014), 93-8.

<sup>269</sup> Yusuf Sawda, *Istiqlal Lubnan wa-l-Ittihad al-Lubnani fi-l-Iskandariyya* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Hilal, 1922), 19-20.



al-Khuri hoisted a new Lebanese flag: a green Cedar on a white background which quickly became the South American *mahjar*'s standard. al-Khuri urged Brazil's Lebanese to join both the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* and the Allied Powers in overthrowing the Turks. al-Khuri concluded that by partnering with the Entente, that “with their victory, we will see the betterment of our homeland.”<sup>270</sup>

*Syrian and Lebanese Nationalist Activism in the Mahjar, and Growing French Influence*

Shortly after arriving in Syria in 1915, Jamal Pasha introduced martial law and placed new limits on the press, closing local opposition newspapers and banning many periodicals from the *mahjar*. At times his regime enforced an even harder line, hiring local thugs to ensure compliance: neither the fire that burned down *al-Nasir*'s press nor the beating of *al-Barq*'s editor in Beirut was formally investigated.<sup>271</sup> During the War's early months, Syrian journalists abroad equated the loss of press freedom with the loss of their homeland.<sup>272</sup> Similarly, Jamal Pasha's unpopular conscription policy led many to assist draft dodgers and their families in hiding from Turkish soldiers.<sup>273</sup> In both cases, the press was presented as a national forum and the place where Syrians and Lebanese could act out in political ways; the circumscription of this space was therefore seen as an act of war. By 1916, the *mahjar*'s activists turned to another mode of national service: deploying its own sons militarily through the French-led *Légion d'Orient*.

The *Légion d'Orient* was an irregular regiment comprised of Syrian, Lebanese, and Armenian volunteers from across the diaspora. Syrian and Lebanese leaders abroad worked with French Foreign Consuls in New York, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo to drum up volunteers for

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<sup>270</sup> The names of those pictured (from bottom right): Mansur al-Khuri, Shukri al-Bakhash, Wadi' 'Abbud, Yusuf Latif, Antun Jabbara, Habib Khitar, As'ad Bitar, Daud al-Khuri, 'Abduh Furnis al-Mathini; (second row, from left): Wadi' abi Samra, Na'um Mina Farhat, Ghattas al-Tayar, Salim 'Aql, Ayyub al-Khuri, Shukri al-Khuri. “Lubnan wa-l-Harb al-Haliyya,” *al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* Pamphlet, 29 September 1914, 1.

<sup>271</sup> AD, SL, Report on l'Alliance Libanaise, Cairo, 12 January 1919. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 462.

<sup>272</sup> Khalil Sa'adih, “‘Athar Sihafiyya,” *al-Majalla*, August 1915, 143-6.

<sup>273</sup> Mukarzil, *Kitab al-Lubnani*, 46.

this force in summer 1916. The *Légion d'Orient* was primarily the brainchild of Shukri Ghanim, who coordinated the recruitment drive from his home in Paris. The effort brought together political parties from across the ideological spectrum: Na‘um Mukarzil's *Nahda Lubnaniyya* and the *Ittihad Lubnani* participated with enthusiasm, recruiting 52 volunteers in New York City in early 1917.<sup>274</sup> There were, however, some groups that refused to participate: Salomon Busader, the president of *Ittihad Lubnani*'s Buenos Aires chapter, defected from his party because he refused to work with pan-Syrianists like Shukri Ghanim or his Ghanim's local agent, former Ottoman consul-general Emir Amin Arslan.<sup>275</sup> Busader's objection stemmed from his party's conviction that the French would not sponsor the construction of a Lebanese entity distinct from greater Syria; such a position was fairly common among *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* partisans prior 1918 (although France's sponsorship of the *Grand Liban* after 1918 later proved Busader's predictions to have been incorrect).

The Syrian press reported on the *Légion d'Orient*'s movements from France in 1916 to Cyprus, and finally its disembarkation to Palestine in 1917. Newspaper editors played a critical role in publicizing the recruitment drive, but also in sponsoring individual volunteers. In March 1916, a young Homsí named Hafiz Khizam traveled from his adopted home in São Paulo to the French Consul in Buenos Aires to enlist in the French military. Najib Trad, editor of *al-Jadid* and officer in Argentina's *Ittihad Lubnani* paid Khizam's passage, and Ghanim's Buenos Aires partner, Amin Arslan, assisted him through the enlistment process.<sup>276</sup> Khizam sent regular letters

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<sup>274</sup> Although this figure comes very early in the campaign (and before the Qaysar-Lakah Delegation later in 1917), they are certainly modest. Simultaneous campaigns to get Syrian immigrants to join the U.S. military were much more successful; tens of thousands of young Syrian and Lebanese men in the United States joined up. As for the 52 *Légion d'Orient* volunteers recruited by Mukarzil in New York, half of them came from New York colony, and half from al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya's Brazilian chapter. Mukarzil reportedly paid their passage to New York before they signed up with France. Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, 101.

<sup>275</sup> Gildas Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amerique du Sud* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2008), 143-4.

<sup>276</sup> Hamiya, *Khalil Sa'adih*, 114-5.

home as he fought alongside French soldiers, and his letters appeared in a syndicated series in Najib Trad's own newspaper, *al-Jadid* (Buenos Aires) as well as in 'Abd al-Massih Haddad's *al-Sa'ih* (New York) and Shukri Ghanim's *Correspondance d'Orient* (Paris).<sup>277</sup> Until 1917, Syrian émigré military recruits were funneled through Buenos Aires, typically managed by Amin Arslan in partnership with the local French Consulate.

But the recruitment drive caused considerable disagreements among Syrians abroad, specifically because *Légion d'Orient* recruits labored in the French military to further French ambitions in the Mashriq, something that Arab nationalists, many pan-Syrian nationalists, and Ottoman loyalists resented. Such disputes sometimes boiled over into episodes of violence, as happened in Rosario, Argentina, in April 1916. Wishing to expand the recruitment campaign into Argentina's interior, Najib Trad arrived in Rosario seeking new enlistments. Trad's arrival sparked an ugly confrontation between pro-Ottoman Syrians and *Légion d'Orient* supporters. In Rosario as elsewhere, support for the project often fell along sectarian lines: Maronites and Greek Orthodox Christians largely supported the French-led regiment, Muslims typically opposed it. Sunni leaders accused the *Legion's* boosters (and by extension the French) of harboring sectarian motivations; a noon-time confrontation outside a Rosario Church devolved into a riot involving hundreds of men.<sup>278</sup> One Ottoman loyalist, a Muslim, was killed, another sixteen were hospitalized and dozens more arrested by Argentinian authorities.<sup>279</sup> The Argentine

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<sup>277</sup> Hafiz Khizam al-Homsi, "Barid min Mutataw'i al-Homsi al-Suri fi-l-Jaysh al-Fransi," *al-Sa'ih*, 10 April 1916, 1. See also Khizam, "Fi-Sahat al-Qital," *al-Sa'ih*, 20 July 1916, 1.

<sup>278</sup> Reportage reveals divisions on what the riot was about. *Al-Huda* draws upon the Argentine Maronite paper *al-Adl* described the riot as Muslim violence against Christians. *Al-Huda's* version does not mention the *Légion d'Orient* recruiters present, "Bayna al-Suriyin: bi-Ism al-Massih wa-l-Muhammad," 5 April 1916, 6. 'Abd al-Massih Haddad's *al-Sa'ih*, by contrast, draws upon Buenos Aires paper *al-Zaman*. It mentions the recruiters, but omits that the riot occurred on a Sunday outside of a Church, "Qatil bayna al-Suriyin," 6 April 1916, 1-2.

<sup>279</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "Qatil bayna al-Suriyin," *al-Sa'ih*, 6 April 1916, 1-2.

government then accused the French of inciting violence in its territory; a street fight with transnational dimensions threatened Argentina's diplomatic equilibrium with France.

From his position in Paris, Shukri Ghanim ramped up recruitment efforts in South America in 1917. Raising a substantial sum through his new political organization, the *Comité Central Syrien* (*al-Lajna al-Suriyya al-Markaziyya* in Arabic), Ghanim sent a two man Syrian delegation to travel across South America campaigning for the *Légion d'Orient* and soliciting recruits. Jamil Mardam Bey and Dr. Qaysar Lakah arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1917, meeting with French consul Paul Claudel, who accompanied them on a tour of every large Syrian



Figure 5: The Mardam-Lakah Delegation in São Paulo, Brazil, June 1917. French Consul Paul Claudel seated in front row, at center; he is flanked by Jamil bey Mardam and Dr. Qaysar Lakah, both members of Shukri Ghanim's Parisian *Comité Central Syrien*. Source: Antunius Jafet, *Na 'mi Jafet: Hayatuhu*, 104.

colony on the continent.<sup>280</sup> The effort, jointly sponsored by Ghanim and the French Foreign Ministry, was very successful in terms of inspiring Syrian solidarity for the Entente; in addition to several dozen new recruits, the Mardam-Lakah delegation amassed 50,000 Francs in relief and aid for the soldiers.<sup>281</sup> Although the delegation drew opposition from some emigrant leaders who

<sup>280</sup> "Fi-Amirka al-Janubiyya: al-Wafd al-Fransawi fi-l-Barazil," *Al-Huda*, 3 August 1917, 5.

<sup>281</sup> Georges Samné, "Les minoritaires syrienne," *Correspondence d'Orient*, 10 March 1918, 129-134.

resented Ghanim's growing influence (especially from his estranged partner Na'um Mukarzil),<sup>282</sup> Ghanim's efforts placed him on the French Foreign Ministry's radar and laid the basis for future cooperation. Jean Gout and Stephen Pichon, for example, both saw Ghanim as a valuable Syrian partner, and as a barometer for Syrian public opinion.<sup>283</sup>

While Syrians abroad coordinated, and sometimes combated, the growing alliance with France through the *Légion d'Orient*, events at home took a sharp turn for the worse. Jamal Pasha's 1916 executions of journalists were quickly followed by a food rationing policy that left Syria's civilian population facing shortages. By June 1916, the shortage produced a famine that ultimately killed between 350,000 and 500,000 in Mount Lebanon and western Syria.<sup>284</sup> The diaspora's newspapers collected letters from compatriots in Beirut, Homs, Zahle, and Mount Lebanon describing mortality rates that often reached fifty or sixty percent.<sup>285</sup> Town-based mutual aid societies began raising relief; groups like the Homs Fraternity (*al-Ikha' al-Homsi*), the Tripoli Society [*al-Jam'iyya al-Tarabulsiyya*], or Maronite Priest Habib Estefan's group Lebanese Youth [*Jam'iyyat al-Shabiba al-Lubnaniyya*] collected relief for their home cities.<sup>286</sup>

As more about the disaster's extent became known, it became clear that famine relief required broader organization across the *mahjar*. Both the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* and the *Ittihad Lubnani* jumped into the breach, relying on their established networks to remit both money and aid to the homeland. A case in point is the *Lajnat I'anat Mankubi Suriyya wa-Lubnan* [The Committee for Syrian and Lebanese Relief, hereafter called *Lajnat al-Mankubin*], headquartered

<sup>282</sup> "Fi-Amirka al-Janubiyya: al-Wafd al-Fransawi fi-l-Barazil," *Al-Huda*, 3 August 1917, 5.

<sup>283</sup> MAE, A-Pais, Ghanim to Ribot, Paris, 23 May 1917. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 225-227.

<sup>284</sup> Mortality figures from contemporary sources vary considerably. See Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 15-23 for her discussion. She estimates WWI's mortality was around 18 percent of the population, 23.

<sup>285</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "'Asbab al-Jaw' fi-Suriya," *al-Sa'ih*, 24 August 1916, 1-2.

<sup>286</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "Suriya wa-Jam'iyyatuna," *al-Sa'ih*, 4 May 1916, 1-2; Farid Istafan, *Habib Istafan: Ra'id min Lubnan, 'arrafa al-Amirikiyatayn Ruhaniyat al-Sharq al-Haqdari* (Beirut: s.p., 1983), 54-5.

in New York City. This committee was linked to a political party called *al-Ittihad al-Suri* [the Syrian Union], which was itself linked to Shukri Ghanim's societies in Paris. In 1916 and 1917, the *Lajnat al-Mankubin* collected monetary relief from committees in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico and printed its progress in *al-Sa'ih*, a political daily edited by 'Abd al-Massih Haddad.<sup>287</sup> Haddad was skeptical of the village-based approach to charity, owing to the unequal distribution in aid,<sup>288</sup> and the corruption of local distributors.<sup>289</sup> His group, the *Lajnat Mankubin*, worked with the Red Cross and U.S. Department of State transfer money to Syria.<sup>290</sup> In Buenos Aires, Khalil Sa'adih arranged for his group, *al-Jam'iyya al-Suriyya*, to fund-raise for the *Lajnat Mankubin*; his own newspaper, *al-Majalla*, reported the Committee's progress.<sup>291</sup> In the summer of 1916, the committee raised over \$13,000 across the Americas.<sup>292</sup>

The press served the relief effort with an organizational space to appeal directly to the public, a public that in many ways had only come to consciousness just years before. The *Lajnat Mankubin* drafted weekly letters to the Syrian *mahjar* as a whole: appeals for aid, volunteers, or for information from Syria obtained through the paper's readership. Letters from home were rare, but when they arrived in Brazil, Argentina, or New York, they were often published.<sup>293</sup> Of course, these letters were subject to a tightening Ottoman censorship policy.<sup>294</sup> That the news of

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<sup>287</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "Ila al-Dahaya," *al-Sa'ih*, 3 August 1916, 2.

<sup>288</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "al-Jaw' fi-Bayrut wa-fi-Ghayriha Aydan: Laysa fi-Lubnan Wahdih," *al-Sa'ih*, 6 July 1916, 1.

<sup>289</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "al-Jaw' fi-Suriyya," *al-Sa'ih*, 3 July 1916, 1-2.

<sup>290</sup> "Ta'lif Lajna 'Amm li-A'ana Mankubi Suriyya wa-Lubnan," *al-Huda*, 3 June 1916, 3.

<sup>291</sup> Hamiya, *Khalil Sa'adih*, 128-30.

<sup>292</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "'Akhbar Mahaliya," *al-Sa'ih*, 24 August 1916, 2.

<sup>293</sup> 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, "Asbab al-Jaw' fi-Suriyya," *al-Sa'ih*, 24 August 24 1916, 1-2. Syrian papers also depended on partners in Cairo; see Habib Karam al-Bustani, "al-Hala al-Hadira fi-Suriyya wa-Lubnan," *al-Huda*, 7 June 1916, 4.

<sup>294</sup> Philip di Tarrazi, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-'Arabiyya*, (Beirut: al-Matba'at al-Adabiyya, 1933), 406.

Jamal Pasha's executions did not make headlines for weeks, but the famine did so immediately, reminds the historian that Ottoman censors were acutely aware of the power of public opinion.<sup>295</sup>

If the relief drive brought together activists across the *mahjar*, emigrant leaders also made choices that sowed the seeds for future discord. 1916 proved a major turning point between the parties and the public: the tone of reportage on the calamity became decidedly political. This happened in two stages. First, the recruitment campaign for the French-led *Légion d'Orient* and the famine relief drive prompted many Syrian leaders abroad to partner with the French Foreign Ministry in unprecedented, and controversial, ways. Second, alliances emerging between the *mahjar*'s political parties and the Great Powers shook loose unresolved questions about Syria's post-Ottoman future, and the place of Lebanon within (or apart from) it. Na'um Mukarzil's *Nahda Lubnaniyya* described a pressing need for Lebanese independence and autonomy from Syria; Ghanim's *Comité Central Syrien* instead referred to Lebanon as "Syria's heart."

Long-standing transnational connections between emigrant leaders and the press broke apart, and over the course of 1916 and 1917 reconstituted themselves along ideological, nationalist lines. To illustrate, Na'um Mukarzil and Shukri Ghanim both supported an alliance with France, and the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* promoted a Francophile perspective. In 1916, however, the two men quarreled over the prospect of an independent Lebanon separate from Syria, and Ghanim closed the Paris chapter, taking his local partners with him. The following year he established the *Comité Central Syrien*; Mukarzil became his most vocal opponent.<sup>296</sup> Around the diaspora, Ghanim's supporters followed suit, forming a new coalition: the New York *Lajnat*

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<sup>295</sup> The first stories on the executions appeared only after Jemal Pasha's book *La vérité* reached Syrian audiences abroad in March 1917. Ali Nabati, "Nazarat fi-Kitab Jamal Pasha," *al-Fatat*, 1 March 1917, 5. The French Foreign Ministry was also belated in its response, calling France's role in the cases "regrettable." MAE, Guerre, T, Pontalis to Ribot, Cairo, 23 March 1917. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 211.

<sup>296</sup> George Samné, *l'Effort Syrien pendant la guerre*, *Cartes* (Paris: n.p., 1919), 5-6.

*Mankubin* was reborn as a larger organization called the *Lajnat Tahrir Suriya wa-Lubnan* [which called itself the Syrian-Lebanese League of Liberation in English], under the leadership of Ayyub Tabet, Amin Rihani, and Jubran Khalil Jubran.<sup>297</sup> Amin Rihani traveled to Mérida, Mexico, and founded a local branch of the *Lajnat Tahrir* in late 1917 to counter Mukarzil's long-standing influence there.<sup>298</sup> In São Paulo, Nami Jafet founded the *Comité Patriotico Syro-Libanenze*.<sup>299</sup> In Egypt, Haqqi bey al-‘Azm established the *Lajnat al-Suriyya al-Lubnaniyya fi-Misr*.<sup>300</sup> In 1918, Ghanim collected telegrams from each of these parties proclaiming their support for a greater Syrian state, “federated and integral.. from the Taurus Mountains... to the Mediterranean Sea,” under French protection. Ghanim remitted the letters to the French Foreign Ministry as proof of the *mahjar*'s political voice.<sup>301</sup>

The *Ittihad Lubnani* saw similar seismic shifts. Disagreements over whether to cultivate Western support led President Iskandar ‘Ammun to resign his post in 1917.<sup>302</sup> After ‘Ammun's defection, the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* narrowed its political vision, calling for a Lebanese state independent from Syria under a Lebanese Republican administration, a position which put it at loggerheads with Shukri Ghanim, the *Comité Central Syrien*, and the interests of the French government.<sup>303</sup> By the time British, French, and Hashimite troops expelled the Ottomans from

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<sup>297</sup> The entire founding executive committee, as reported by the U.S. Department of State, was as follows: Ayyub Tabet (president), Amin al-Rihani (vice president), N. T. Tadross (treasurer), Gibran Khalil Gibran (English secretary), Mikha'il Na'im (Arabic secretary), Najib Diab (editor, *Mirat al-Gharb*), Joseph M. Khoury (editor, *al-Sha'ab*), Shukri M. Bakhkhash (editor, *al-Fatat*), ‘Abd al-Massih Haddad (editor, *al-Sa'ih*), Nasib ‘Arida (editor, *al-Funun*), Ilya Abu Madi (coeditor, *Mirat al-Gharb*). The committee identified itself in partnership with the *Comité Central Syrien* (Paris), the *Syrian Committee* (London), the *Comité de Recrutement des Volontaires Syriens* (Cairo), and the *Sociedad Sirio-Libanese* (Mérida, Mexico). NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, group 59. 10 May 1918 letter from Syrian Mount Lebanon League, document 763.72119/1685, 2.

<sup>298</sup> Amin al-Rihani, “Chronique Syrienne,” *Correspondence d'Orient*, 10 March 1918, 154.

<sup>299</sup> Comité Central Syrien, *La Question syrienne exposée par les syriens* (Paris: n.p., 1919), 42.

<sup>300</sup> Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate*, (I. B. Taurus, 2003), 20-1.

<sup>301</sup> MAE, SL, Ghanim to Clemenceau, Paris, 18 March 1919. Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 498-9.

<sup>302</sup> Lyne Lohéac, *Daoud Ammoun et la création de l'état libanais* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978), 73-4.

<sup>303</sup> Sawda, *al-Ittihad al-Lubnani fi-l-Qatr al-Masri*, 19-27.



Syria in October 1918, the *mahjar's* politics realigned along the, at times contradictory, questions of French support and the nature of Lebanon's relationship to Syria. This new state of affairs gave the French government its choice of Syrian partners, empowering it to interfere in the *mahjar's* politics more than ever. And although the French Foreign Ministry closely aligned with Shukri Ghanim and the larger Syrian Unionist Movement during the War, this all changed in January 1919, as the Paris Peace Conference opened its formal proceedings. Over the course of 1919, the victorious Entente Powers and a brand new League of Nations would hammer out the postwar settlement governing former Ottoman territories, including those in the Middle East. And in January 1919, the French Foreign Ministry made two major changes in terms of which Syrian political parties to support: it abandoned its former collaborators in the Syrian Unionist movement led by Shukri Ghanim, and it cultivated a new alliance with the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* and the Lebanese independence movement. But to understand why they French Foreign Ministry made this significant shift in alliances in January 1919, some geopolitical context must be explored. For within the Syrian unionist movement abroad, there emerged in early 1919 some new sympathies for the notion of “complete independence” for a federated Syria “without protection or tutelage,” ideas popularized by Emir Faysal, the leader of the Arab Revolt.

*Mahjar Against the Mashriq: Syrian-Arab Nationalism and the Question of Representation*

When the Syrian emigrant soldiers of the *Légion d'Orient* landed in the eastern Mediterranean in 1917, they found themselves joining the predominantly British Allied forces that had been campaigning there for several months, flanked by Arab troops loyal to the Hashimite Emir Faysal, son of Sharif Husayn of Mecca. The alliance between the Hashimites and the British Foreign Office had begun with the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence of 1915, a series of letters wherein Britain offered its support for the formation of an independent Arab Kingdom in return for Arab military support against Ottoman troops in the Mashriq. The Sharif

Husayn's son, Faysal, raised a levy of Arab troops in 1916, and the "Arab Revolt" campaigned northward from the Hijaz into southern Syria, reaching Damascus in October 1918. With the Armistice of Mudros and the evacuation of Ottoman forces from Syria, Faysal set about fulfilling what his British partners had promised him: the creation of an independent Arab Kingdom centered on Damascus.

But if Britain had promised Syria to Faysal in 1915, just months later it had also promised it to France. In May 1916, just four months after concluding negotiations with Sharif Husayn, the British concluded a secret agreement with France ceding control over Syria to the latter. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 demarcated territorial "zones of influence" shared between Britain and France; in return for French recognition of British influence in Iraq, the Hijaz, and Palestine, Britain would support French influence in Syria and Mount Lebanon. As Allied victory in the Middle East looked more certain in 1918, the partnership between British General Allenby and Emir Faysal's Arab forces created mounting concerns among French officials about whether the British would honor the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. No sooner had the Paris Peace Conference started its proceedings than Emir Faysal headed to Paris, eager to make his claim for a federated and independent Syria, without French assistance or mandate. And worse, France's closest allies among the Syrian emigrant parties, Shukri Ghanim's *Comité Central Syrien*, appeared to be losing credibility to the heady mixture of secular constitutionalism and nationalist self-determination that Faysal's Arab Nationalist movement promised.

During World War I, France's official opinion of Syrian and Lebanese political parties was closely guided by concerns over these parties' links with (or sympathies to) Emir Faysal, and Cairo's *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* was no exception. In February 1918, the French Consul in

Cairo reported a meeting between *Ittihad Lubnani* leaders and one of Faysal's partisans, Farid al-Khazin. The Consul concluded that "it appears that the Committee of the *Ittihad Lubnani* thinks it better to secure the future of its country by linking itself with a Muslim Hijazi prince rather than through a secular protector [France]. This presumption works to Faysal's advantage."<sup>304</sup> The Foreign Ministry's suspicion remained that the *Ittihad Lubnani* represented British and Hashimite political interests. French Minister to Egypt LeFevre-Pontalis, for instance, described *Ittihad Lubnani* leader Yusuf Sawda as a Lebanese emigrant "sans notoriété" in a letter to Stephen Pichon, concluding that his claims that "France will grant Lebanon its absolute independence" should not be taken seriously.<sup>305</sup> France's preference to work its influence through Shukri Ghanim's Comité Central Syrien and its American clients, moreover, sparked occasional confrontations with *Ittihad Lubnani* activists who resented Ghanim's Syrian unionist sympathies. In Buenos Aires, for instance, the local *Ittihad Lubnani* branch (*Union Libanense*) threatened to end its endorsement of the *Légion d'Orient* unless France moved to support a national *Grand Liban* "within its historical, geographic, and natural boundaries" and agreed to take the Lebanese independence movement more seriously.<sup>306</sup> During the War, such protests had fallen on deaf ears in Paris.

The changing circumstances in January 1919 led the French Foreign Ministry to revisit its position on the *Ittihad Lubnani*. Emir Faysal had arrived in Paris, ready to present his case for an Arab Kingdom in Syria. Eager to check Faysal's momentum, *Comité Central Syrien* president Shukri Ghanim issued a public statement authorizing France to speak on Syria's behalf at the

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<sup>304</sup> MAE, Guerre, Turquie, LeFevre-Pontalis to Pichon, Cairo, 8 February 1918. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 307.

<sup>305</sup> MAE, Guerre, T, LeFevre-Pontalis to Pichon, Cairo, 27 December 1917. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 286-7.

<sup>306</sup> MAE, Guerre, T, Cherchali to Couse, Mecca, 23 February 1918. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 313.

Paris Peace Conference, an announcement that was immediately met with a firestorm of criticism, even from Ghanim's most earnest supporters in the Americas.<sup>307</sup> Writing in his New York City paper, *Mirat al-Gharb*, Najib Diab wrote a furious article proclaiming that Shukri Ghanim held no authority to claim the *mahjar's* voice and acted in bad faith.<sup>308</sup> In return, *Mirat al-Gharb* sustained a barrage of angry letters defending Ghanim's statement.<sup>309</sup> Undeterred, Diab then published a mock proclamation thanking the *Comité Central Syrien* for making partition and imperialism Syria's inescapable fate.<sup>310</sup> Diab then mocked Ghanim's partners in the Americas as traitors (*khā'inīn*) who would sell their homeland to the highest bidder.<sup>311</sup> It was clear that within the Syrian nationalist movement, the hegemony Ghanim's party had maintained during the War was quickly shaking apart in the lure of complete independence.

In searching for new allies for French influence in Syria, the French Foreign Ministry revisited its opinions of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*, and in January 1919 the Cairo Consulate conducted a thorough investigation of the party's origins and agenda. The report concluded that the *Ittihad Lubnani's* aim for "the complete independence of Lebanon, under protectorate of the Powers, within its natural, historical, and geographical boundaries" was more easily conversant with French interests in the Levant than was Shukri Ghanim's vision of a unified great Syrian state under French mandate.<sup>312</sup> The report advised cultivating the *Ittihad Lubnani* as a French ally to leverage against Emir Faysal's demands. It cited the party's control over the Syrian press

<sup>307</sup> "Mu'tamar Suri Fransawi fi-Marseilles," *Mirat al-Gharb*, 4 January 1919, 1-2.

<sup>308</sup> Najib Diab, "Hadith al-Yawm: al-Zu'ama' al-Kadhiba," *Mirat al-Gharb*, 16 January 1919, 7.

<sup>309</sup> William Kataflis, "Kitab Maftuh min William Kataflis 'ila Mirat al-Gharb," *Mirat al-Gharb*, 17 January 1919, 4-5. See also Najib Diab, "Hadith al-Yawm: 'ila Sahib al-Sha'b," *Mirat al-Gharb*, 18 January 1919, 3.

<sup>310</sup> Najib Diab, "Wisaya Fransa 'ala-Suriyya 'Asbasat 'Amr Mutiqin," *al-Sa'ih*, 1 May 1919, 1-2.

<sup>311</sup> Najib Diab, "Wisaya Fransa 'ala-Suriyya 'Asbasat 'Amr Mutiqin," *al-Sa'ih*, May 1, 1919, 1.

<sup>312</sup> Auguste Adib Pasha, *Lubnan ba'd al-Harb* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Ma'ruf, 1919), 108-112.

as a particularly valuable asset that would make it “the largest, most influential, and most capable of all Lebanese societies.”<sup>313</sup>

As the Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon focused on strengthening a French partnership with the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* in Cairo, his Ministry notably distanced itself from Shukri Ghanim.<sup>314</sup> More than that, Ghanim found his wings clipped; his persistence requests in late 1918 and 1919 to travel to Syria to help organize Syrian unionist committees there were consistently denied. Unable to leave France, Ghanim took to writing letters of protest to his former political partners; he accused France of harboring sectarian intentions in managing Syria, and he warned Pichon that in siding with the cause of Lebanese independence, France would not see Syrian independence but instead its pitiable “dismemberment by powerful hands” But even Ghanim’s most scornful protests contained within them an appeal; “We would like to add,” Ghanim concluded in 1919, that the *Comité* continued to support “a renewal of our fidelity to our secular friend” should France abandon the Lebanon Question and “return to its senses.”<sup>315</sup>

But if Ghanim’s greater Syrian project had seemed, for the French, an entrée into the post-Ottoman Mashriq during the War, by 1919 the Comité Central Syrien’s insistence on Syrian political unity, a federated constitutional Republic, and limited French assistance resembled Emir Faysal’s project for immediate independence for a constitutional Arab nationalist monarchy far too closely for French comfort. Indeed, even for some of Ghanim’s erstwhile supporters, Syrian unionism began to seem an inferior substitute for complete independence. In February 1919, France sponsored the First Lebanese Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. The First

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<sup>313</sup> AD, SL, Report on l’Alliance Libanaise, Cairo, 12 January 1919. In Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 463. Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 462-467.

<sup>314</sup> MAE, SL, Gout to Pichon, Paris, 12 October 1918. Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 387-8.

<sup>315</sup> MAE, SL, Ghanim to Pichon, Paris, 8 October 1918. Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 380-1.

Lebanese Delegation was comprised of representative from two bodies: the Administrative Council of Ba‘abda (a constitutive assembly of notables from Mount Lebanon founded during the Ottoman mutasarrifiyya of the late nineteenth century), and executive members of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*. The delegation’s head, Daud ‘Ammun, presided over both organization, and had returned to Beirut from Cairo shortly after the War ended. With France’s sponsorship, the First Lebanese Delegation made the case for a separate, “greater Lebanon” that would join Mount Lebanon and Beirut to the coastal cities of Tripoli and ‘Akkar in the north, Saida in the south, and with the fertile Biqa’ Valley behind the Lebanon Mountains. ‘Ammun justified these borders using a blend of appeals for economic viability and historical determinism, concluding that only the “reestablishment” of greater Lebanon’s its “natural, historical, and geographical borders” could protect Lebanon from the continuing threat of emigration and privation:

“The territories that these borders encompass are a condition of our existence; without them, we have no commerce, no agriculture, and our people are forced into emigration; Just let us close the gate, by simple administrative action, as we have, in this war, literally died of hunger.”<sup>316</sup>

‘Ammun’s argument conformed to the stances popularized by the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* in the Syrian press abroad; that Spring, the party published a book-length pamphlet laying out the historical bases for the creation of a greater Lebanese state and reproducing the points of ‘Ammun’s meeting with the Great Powers. The pamphlet, called *Lebanon after the War*, appealed to Lebanese living around the world to support the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* and petition the League of Nations on behalf of the First Lebanese Delegation.<sup>317</sup> And petitions arrived to Paris in droves from Syrian and Lebanese communities across Europe, Africa, and the

<sup>316</sup> Statement from the First Lebanese Delegation to the Conférence de la Paix, February 13, 1919; M.A.E., *E-Levant 1918-1940, Syrie-Liban*. Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 479-481.

<sup>317</sup> Shaykh Farid Hubaysh, trans (French to Arabic), Auguste Adib Pasha, *Lubnan ba‘d al-Harb* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Ma‘rif, 1919), 4. The appeal on the *Ittihad Lubnani*’s behalf written by Antun al-Jumayyil. This was an Arabic translation of *Liban après la guerre*, written in late 1918 by *Ittihad* leader Adib Pasha and addressed to the French Foreign Ministry; *Liban après la guerre* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1918).

Americas. Many of these supported Daud 'Ammun's First Lebanese Delegation and the project for a greater Lebanese state under French mandate. Others reiterated demands for Syrian unity and more limited French tutelage; Ghanim collected a series of these for remission to the League of Nations, concluding that Syrians would be best served if France would "hasten the fulfillment of her Mandate (over all of Syria) so that the damage caused by these regrettable rivalries, competitions, and unjustifiable claims (concerning Mount Lebanon) may be swiftly repaired."<sup>318</sup>

But after the First Lebanese Delegation's February 1919 meeting in Paris, a new voice was heard from the Syrians in the *mahjar* with increasing urgency: those who demanded complete independence for Syria, who opposed French involvement in Syrian affairs, and who saw in Emir Faysal's movement the opportunity for the realization of a decentralized constitutionalism reminiscent of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Calling itself the "Moderates Party" in Cairo, the "New Syria Party" in New York, and the "Democratic Nationalist Party" in Buenos Aires, this new political tendency merged complete independence, secular nationalism, and a potential alliance with the United States of America into a political program conversant with Hashimite Arab nationalism as well as Syrian unionism.

*The "New Syria Parties:" Syrian-Arab Nationalism and the American Mandate*

With the French actively pursuing the creation of a greater Lebanese state and its mandate over all of Syria in 1919, many among Shukri Ghanim's former supporters began seeking new alternatives for the preservation of Syrian unity and autonomy. In the Syrian *mahjar* in the Americas, true Hashimite Arab nationalism had been present but had been a minority current before spring 1919, organized primarily by two *al-Fatat* branches in New York City and São Paulo.<sup>319</sup> Among Syrian nationalists, a general mistrust of Hashimite designs on Syria

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<sup>318</sup> M.A.E., *E-Levant 1918-1940, Syrie-Liban*. Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 498-9.

<sup>319</sup> *Al-Fatat*, the largest of the Syrian political committees organizing for Emir Faysal's Arab Revolt, was most active

(Faysal was, after all, a foreigner from the Hijaz) had prevailed over concerns about French imperial designs before 1919. But as the news from Paris increasingly sounded as though the *Grand Liban* would be separated from its Syrian hinterland, an anti-French tendency among the Syrian nationalists ignited a new organizational campaign between Syrians in Cairo, New York City, and Buenos Aires. In Cairo, Faris Nimr and Ya‘qub Sarruf (publishers of the *al-Muqattam* and *al-Muqtataf*) established a Syrian Moderates Party in February 1919. The party’s manifesto, collected by French intelligence officers in Cairo, laid out the principle demands of the party: complete independence for a united Syrian federation; absolute opposition to a French mandate; the promotion of a partnership with the United States of America in matters of technical assistance and national development; and the complete separation of religious matters from government and politics (save for personal status matters).<sup>320</sup>

Soon after its establishment in Egypt, Nimr’s party sought out connections with Syrian and Arab nationalists in the Americas, relying on personal networks and significantly, on links between alumni of the Syrian Protestant College of Beirut (SPC). Of the men involved in organizing political committees in concert with Nimr’s Moderates Party and who pushed for an alliance between their movement and the United States of America, nearly all were SPC graduates: Georges Khayrallah, Philip K. Hitti, and Abraham Rihbany in New York, and Khalil

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in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. Its São Paulo branch was organized in 1917 by a Homs immigrant named Jurj Atlas; it was called *Homs al-Fatat* and its official newspaper was *al-Zahrawi*, named after executed parliamentarian ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi and which bore the tagline “independence or death.” In New York City, *al-Fatat* had a local branch under Shukri Bakhkhash, who published a political daily, also called *al-Fatat*. Bakhkhash’s anticolonial Arab nationalism had been joined with a desire for partnership with the United States of America since the War, and his views present the clearest precedent for those of the *Hizb Surriya al-Jadida*.

<sup>320</sup> AD, Nantes, SL, 1er Versement, Papiers George-Picot. LeFevre to Georges-Picot, “Le parti modéré syrien.” Cairo, 26 February 1919. In Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 486. This letter included the names of the organizing committee: Faris Nimr, Suleiman Nasif, Sa‘id Shukair Pasha, Na‘um Shukair, Ya‘qub Sarruf, Amin Mirshaq, and Greek Orthodox Bishop of Aleppo (exiled to Cairo during the War) Mgr. Rufa’il.



Sa'adih in Buenos Aires.<sup>321</sup> One Najib Khalaf, a Moderate Party member in Mansura, Egypt, for instance, wrote his brother Nasib in New York, explaining,

“It (the Moderates Party) has declared most emphatically that Syria is for the Syrians, independent and undivided, under American guidance. This party is made up of the most progressive Syrian element, and has gained such prominence as render it the leading and most influential party in Syria.”<sup>322</sup>

In New York, these ideas resonated with Khayrallah, Hitti, and Rihbany, all of whom had advocated for Syrian American participation in America's war effort and who headed a political committee called *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* [the New Syria Party, also called the Syrian National League in English]. The *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida*, advocated for a “Syrian homeland, federated and independent,” with “no tutelage, no protection” from any foreign powers, save for technical assistance from the United States.<sup>323</sup> In 1918, Abraham Rihbany published a monograph called *America Save the Near East*, which endorsed an alliance between the Syrian nationalist movement and the United States of America. The text analysed America's unique position and status as an anticolonial world power. In opposition to the explicit agendas of Britain and especially France (as laid out by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916), Rihbany concluded that the United States alone could guarantee Syrian independence in keeping with the principles of national self-determination.<sup>324</sup> In 1919, fellow partisan Ayyub Tabet elaborated on this notion, arguing that as a young nation “in its childhood,” the U.S. was best positioned to give Syria what

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<sup>321</sup> MAE, SL, Translated circular, “La nouvelle ligue nationale Syrien de New York,” New York, February 1919. In Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 481-2.

<sup>322</sup> Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum.

<sup>323</sup> Abraham Rihbany, “Amirka fi-Suriya,” *Mirat al-Gharb*, 19 February 1919, 2.

<sup>324</sup> Abraham Rihbany, *America Save the Near East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1918). From Paris, Comité Central Syrien leader Shukri Ghanim wrote to Georges Clemenceau regarding the “new Syria” parties, framing them specifically as a repudiation of France's role in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreements. Ghanim (neither a member nor supporter of the “new Syria” movement) warned Clemenceau that these movements could put a significant amount of resources at Emir Faysal's disposal. He closed his letter by suggesting France revoke its intentions to support British control over Palestine and divide greater Lebanon from Syria, lest the French lose all of Syria. MAE, SL. Ghanim to Clemenceau, Paris, 18 March 1919. In Hokayem, ‘Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 498-499.

it needed: technical assistance (*musā'ada*) without imperial tutelage (*wiṣāya*).<sup>325</sup> Tabet styled himself as the United States' Syrian partner, even proposing to conduct a formal treaty of friendship between a united Syrian federation and the United States of America. Tabet's public statements incensed French diplomats; French Minister LeFevre-Pontalis scoffed at the irony of asking an allegedly "anti-colonial" America to take mandate over the East before dismissing the *Hizb al-Suriyya al-Jadida* as British agents.<sup>326</sup>

Meanwhile, in Buenos Aires, Syrian journalist Khalil Sa'adih founded the *al-Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Watani* (Democratic Nationalist Party). Like Khayrallah and Hitti in New York, Khalil Sa'adih had been a colleague of Faris Nimr's at the SPC in Beirut. Like Nimr, Sa'adih had socialist leanings and spent the War developing an anti-colonial reading of events back home. In January 1919, Sa'adih issued a public call for a reassessment of the diaspora's political goals, and he announced his intention to host a General Syrian Congress in Buenos Aires.<sup>327</sup> The Conference reflected Sa'adih's desire to form a secular patriotic coalition against French domination: "we are no longer Muslim, nor Christian, Druze, nor Jew," Sa'adih wrote, "for the gallows are erected for all of us together; the famine killed all indiscriminately. We must now form... a single coalition. We are now Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians, without factions, religions, or sects."<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Ayyub Tabet, "Suriyya fi-l-Mu'tamar al-Silmi," *al-Sa'ih*, 12 May 1919, 1.

<sup>326</sup> AD, Mandat, SL, 1er Versement, Papiers Georges-Picot, LeFevre-Pontalis to Georges-Picot, Paris, 26 February 1919. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 485-486. It's worth noting that Tabet's decision to back a possible American Mandate in Syria was probably a surprise to the French Foreign Ministry. In February 1919, just days before the First Lebanese Delegation, Tabet had proclaimed his support for a French Mandate over united Syria on behalf of his WWI-era organization, the *Lajnat Mankubin*. He quickly reversed his position on the French as mandatory after the First Lebanese Delegation, a pattern seen among many Syrian nationalists in 1919. NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59, Roll 0092, 763.72/10175, "Department of State Weekly Report, 7 February 1920," 86.

<sup>327</sup> Khalil Sa'adih, "Kitab Maftuh 'ila al-Suriyyin wa-l-Lubnaniyyin wa-l-Filistiniyyin," *al-Majalla*, 15 November 1918.

<sup>328</sup> Khalil Sa'adih, "Kitab Maftuh 'ila al-Suriyyin wa-l-Lubnaniyyin wa-l-Filistiniyyin," *al-Majalla*, 15 November 1918.

Sa‘adih's Syrian Congress occurred on 25 February 1919, timed symbolically to raise protest to the First Lebanese Delegation occurring simultaneously in Paris. Its resolutions—that Syria be granted its complete independence [*al-istiqlāl al-tām*], without French “protection” [*himāya*], and that the new Syrian nation be given a seat at the League of Nations—laid the basis for Sa‘adih's *Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Watani*. The Party's slogan, “A bedouin's independence is better than civilized bondage” [*al-istiqlāl ma ‘a al-badāwa khayr min-l- ‘ubūda ma ‘a al-ḥaḍāra*], contested Shukri Ghanim's idea that Syria was not yet ready for independence and required guided development first.<sup>329</sup> Sa‘adih emphasized “the rights of barbarians” (*ḥuqūq al-barābara*) to national independence. He argued that in the former Ottoman lands, national sovereignty must precede civilization (*tamaddun*); it could not happen the other way around.

The relationship between the “New Syria” parties and the Hashimite Arab nationalism was a complex one, much more complicated than a simple partnership or alliance. Khalil Sa‘adih's proclamations regarding “a bedouin's independence” were less a true declaration of Arab nationalist solidarity than an understanding that Emir Faysal's goals in Syria closely resembled those of the Syrian unionists. In April 1919, the New York branch of the *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* pursued (and obtained) Faysal's approval of a potential United States mandate over Syria, in return for its support of his appeals against the French.<sup>330</sup> Such negotiations show that the “New Syria” parties were not merely satellites of the Arab nationalist movement; instead, they engaged Faysal in a horizontal pattern of collaboration focused on the shared goals of each

<sup>329</sup> Badr el-Hage, *Khalil Sa‘adih: Silsilat al-‘A‘mal al-Majhula* (London: Riad el-Rayyes, 1987), 18-20.

<sup>330</sup> An internal *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* records this negotiation in its 7 April 1919 circular, Syrian National League (*Hizb Suriya al-Jadida*). Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum. An April 1919 U.S. State Department document confirms Faysal's cooperation with the *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* and provides a translation of a party pamphlet circulated in Cairo by a “C Tabet, from a very prominent and influential Syrian family, and whose brother is brigadier-general Tabet, attached to the staff of Prince Feisal,” NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59. American Consul in Cairo Hampton Gray to U.S. Secretary of State, 11 April 1919, document 763.72119/4555, 3.

movement, particularly against the division of Syria and for an American role in Syrian reconstruction. With those goals identified in April 1919, Emir Faysal returned to Paris to again seek an audience with the League of Nations, and the New Syria parties both in Cairo and in the Americas published extensively about their project. Faris Nimr wrote to George Khayrallah in New York, directing him to “publish through associated Press that... our party has been petitioning the Paris Peace Conference that Syria be kept undivided and that... the United States of America be named mandatory power for Syria. We must appeal to the American public and press to support our aspirations.”<sup>331</sup> Meanwhile, a pamphlet written in New York, called “America and Syria” appeared in circulation in Cairo and Alexandria. It endorsed American reconstruction in a united Syria, and proposed Faysal as an intermediary between the United States and the Syrian people. The pamphlet concluded,

“All right minded persons will confidently believe that America will not let the Syrians’ call (for reconstruction) go unheeded. Indeed she has the lofty idealism and imagination to appreciate the privilege of returning on behalf of the West, the debt of the East, of helping in the restoration of the old glories of Jerusalem and Damascus and the land of immemorial cedars... through that masterpiece, the League of Nations covenant.”<sup>332</sup>

With this momentum at his back, Emir Faysal returned to Paris in April 1919 to accompany a Syrian delegation made up of his partisans and “new Syria” supporters at the Paris Peace Conference. The French protested, charging that Faysal’s Syrian delegation was not truly representative of the Syrian people’s feelings regarding a French Mandate. After some deliberation, the League of Nations dismissed the delegates without hearing their appeal.

Outraged by claims that their protests against a French Mandate were not “representative” enough, Georges Khayrallah drafted a challenge to the League of Nations from

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<sup>331</sup> Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum.

<sup>332</sup> NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59. American Consul in Cairo Hampton Gray to U.S. Secretary of State, 11 April 1919, document 763.72119/4555, 11.

New York. In it, he claimed that if the League of Nations wanted to find the true pulse of the Syrian people, they would have to venture beyond the confines of Paris. They could not rely on printed materials arriving to France from Damascus, because even though “Syrian Muslims quite plainly speak that they do not want France... censorship is so rigid and strict that not a shred of paper in which a political idea is expressed is allowed to go out of the country.”<sup>333</sup> Khayrallah challenged that instead of deliberating the Syrian Question from Paris, “the League of Nations (ought to) approach the Syrian people direct (sic) and ask them to speak for themselves.” Khayrallah’s circular endorsed the idea of an independent commission to Syria to discern the wishes of its people, and it argued that as “the best friend of the weak peoples,” the United States of America was the obvious candidate to form such a commission. With the announcement that an American Commission headed by Charles Crane and Henry Churchill King had been scheduled to arrive in Syria in June 1919, the *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* rejoiced, stating:

“America is our best friend. She is the best friend of the weak peoples. America made it possible for the weak nations to speak. America made it possible for dependent states to have justice and be free. Now is the time; now is our opportunity! ... Have the Syrians courage enough to ask for what they want? Have we, who live in the United States of America, the land of freedom and free speech, the courage to speak our minds?”<sup>334</sup>

The idea for an American-led commission of inquiry into a postwar settlement in greater Syria originated in the doubts of American policymakers that the plan for a *Grand Liban* as laid out by the Paris Peace Conference’s First Lebanese Delegation truly represented the wishes of the people who would come to live in the new state.<sup>335</sup> These doubts were informed by the views of

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<sup>333</sup> 7 April 1919 circular, Syrian National League (*Hizb Suriya al-Jadida*). Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum.

<sup>334</sup> Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum.

<sup>335</sup> The U.S. Department of State was particularly skeptical about the demands of the Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani in general, and had been since 1918. A January 1918 internal memo investigating the viability of the *Grand Liban* concluded that the territory desired by Adib Pasha’s movement was only 51% Christian, and that “even the Christian

prominent American missionaries in Beirut, especially those affiliated with the Syrian Protestant College. SPC president Howard Bliss, for example, requested that the League of Nations sponsor an “Inter-Allied or Neutral Commission” to Syria to determine the true wishes of its people as early as February 1919.<sup>336</sup> Ussama Makdisi argues that in the face of competing European territorial claims, this was a “revolutionary proposal” that “defied the imperial nature of both [the] Sykes-Picot and the Balfour Declaration” by introducing the principle of national self-determination in a meaningful way.<sup>337</sup> The prominence of SPC alumni among the ranks of the “new Syria” parties in the Syrian *mahjar* as well as their enthusiasm for an American commission to Syria convinced some French officials that these parties had been formed through the work of American or British intelligence agencies.<sup>338</sup> The interactions between the *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* leaders and the U.S. Department of State, however, demonstrate that the Syrian American activists approached them, and not the other way around.

Arriving in Syria in June 1919, The Inter-Allied Commission led by Charles Crane and Henry Churchill King travelled extensively through Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian territory, interviewing local elites, clerical leaders, and various political parties with the goal of establishing the representative political will of each district’s population.<sup>339</sup> Its findings largely validated the arguments of Emir Faysal and the “new Syria” parties: most Syrians wanted

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element is divided in its views. There are many opponents among the Christians to the creation of an Independent State of Mount Lebanon.” NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59, Roll 0381, Yale, Diplomat to Cairo to Leland Harrison, Dept. of State, 28 January 1918 Report “The Syrian Question Report #12,” document 763.72119/1717, 13.

<sup>336</sup> Ussama Samir Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: the Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations 1820-2001* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 136.

<sup>337</sup> Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 137.

<sup>338</sup> AD, SL, February 26, 1919 Letter from LeFevre-Pontalis to George-Picot, “The Moderate Syrian Party,” 1er Versement, Papiers Georges-Picot. In Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Francais*, 485-486.

<sup>339</sup> Ussama Makdisi reports that in all, they received 1,863 written petitions, visited 36 towns and cities, and heard from representatives from an additional 1,520 villages. “The American commission was nothing if not comprehensive,” he concludes. Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 140.

immediate and complete independence for Syria; that if a foreign Mandate was to be imposed on Syria, American or British tutelage was preferable to French; that most Syrians supported a single constitutional state including Lebanon and Palestine; that Syrians rejected Zionist claims to a state in Palestine out of hand.<sup>340</sup> The Commission's report was sent to the League of Nations in August 1919, where it was subsequently ignored. Instead, the French Foreign Ministry began laying the groundwork for a Second Lebanese Delegation, this time led by the chief cleric of Mount Lebanon's Uniate Maronite Church, Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik.

*The Second Lebanese Delegation of 1919: Competing Lebanese Nationalisms and the Church*  
As the American King-Crane Commission toured Syria and Palestine, French Foreign

Ministers in Paris began to discuss their options in light of early predictions that the Commissioners would confirm that most Syrians and a significant portion of Lebanese preferred complete independence to the prospect of a French Mandate.<sup>341</sup> Foreign Minister Pichon sent Lt. Colonel Cousse to Damascus to discuss a rapprochement with Emir Faysal in June 1919. Cousse suggested that in return to Faysal's recognition of a greater Lebanese state, France would guarantee the "future independence of Syria."<sup>342</sup> The Emir rebuked French overtures, and remained firm in his conviction that any "indigenous movement for Lebanese separation" was in

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<sup>340</sup> After interviewing Syrians and Palestinians over the course of eight weeks in summer 1919, the King-Crane Commission Report, delivered to the League of Nations in August 1919 and subsequently ignored, found that the majority of Syrians opposed the creation of a foreign Mandate in Syria (40-1), but that if a Mandate was necessary, they desired close League of Nations supervision (41), with either the United State of America (46) or Great Britain (47) serving in a limited technical capacity. The Commission also recommended heeding Syrian appeals for democratic and constitutional self-government and preserving Syrian political unity (46). King-Crane Commission: Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey, 28 August 1919, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 4, Oberlin College Digital Archive. Accessed on 12 March 2014 at <http://www.oberlin.edu/library/digital/king-crane/>

<sup>341</sup> Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 131.

<sup>342</sup> After Faysal left Paris to organize in Damascus and Beirut in 1919, the French sent Lt. Colonel Cousse to talk terms with Faysal. Their discussions in Damascus in June 1919 represent the final time that France would attempt negotiations with Faysal over Syrian independence; Faysal's decision to rebuke to ultimately Lt. Col. Cousse only sped the Foreign Ministry's efforts to groom Maronite Patriarch Huwayyik as an ally. See Arch. Diplom. Nantes, *Mandat, Beyrouth, 1er Versement, Correspondence du Lieutenant-Colonel Cousse*. In Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 606-608.

fact a *parti colonial* working in French employ. Lt. Colonel Cousse concluded similarly of Faysal's partisans in Damascus, "the extremists of the Complete Independence Party... certainly there are local English agents operating among them."<sup>343</sup>

Although Faysal swiftly sent the French packing in June 1919, just the presence of a French Lt. Colonel sent rumors flying in both Mount Lebanon and into the *mahjar* that France had reached agreement with the Hashimite Emir. Those who supported the terms of the *Grand Liban* as laid out by the First Lebanese Delegation protested in Ba'abda,<sup>344</sup> and many more wrote to the Patriarch of the Maronite Church, Ilyas Huwayyik, entreating him to speak out on behalf of Lebanese national aspirations. In the American *mahjar*, Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalist propaganda competed for space as speculation over the King-Crane Commission and France's meetings with Faysal continued in July 1919.<sup>345</sup> Among supporters of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* and other secular Lebanese nationalists organizations, an increasingly acerbic political atmosphere conditioned by rumors and propaganda resulted in the resurgence of Maronite Christian nationalism. The *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda Lubnaniyya*, Na'um Mukarzil's party headquartered in New York City, was at the vanguard of this new movement, and in summer 1919 his party pushed for a second Lebanese delegation comprised primarily of Maronite clergy. In June 1919, Mukarzil himself travelled to Paris, where he wrote appeals to the French and the Maronite Patriarch for the sponsorship of a second Lebanese Delegation.<sup>346</sup>

Meanwhile, French consular officials in Cuba and elsewhere reported an uptick in *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* propaganda across the Americas as well as a dramatic boost

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<sup>343</sup> AD, *Mandat, Beyrouth, 1er Versement, Correspondence du Lieutenant-Colonel Cousse*. In Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 607..

<sup>344</sup> Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 62-3.

<sup>345</sup> Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 349.

<sup>346</sup> MAE, SL, Cambon to Georges-Picot, Paris, 30 May 1919. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 593.



in the organization's popularity. In Cuba, for instance, Consul Mr. Brillouin reported that Mukarzil and the *Nahda Lubnaniyya* had become an overnight sensation "that represents some ten thousand people locally." In his report to Paris, Brillouin described a series of mass demonstrations by the island's Lebanese nationalists. The demonstrators brought pamphlets printed by Mukarzil's press in Brooklyn, as well as a new Lebanese flag designed by the *Nahda Lubnaniyya*, a French tricolor "bearing a Cedar within the white band."<sup>347</sup> Although in the end, the King-Crane Commission's report was not released to the public (nor was it officially entered into the proceedings at the Peace Conference),<sup>348</sup> fears among Lebanese Maronites living abroad that its findings might contradict plans for a greater Lebanese state drove many to support the unambiguous Francophilism and Maronite nationalist agenda of the *Nahda Lubnaniyya*.

Huwayyik met with the King-Crane commissioners at his Church's Patriarchate compound in Mount Lebanon, where he confirmed his assent with the terms of Daud 'Ammun's First Lebanese Delegation. Significantly, the Patriarch framed the Lebanese nation in terms of secular self-determination, and not Maronite nationalism: "If *Lubnan al-Kabir* is granted independence, and is allowed its nationhood and internal security, then we will protect our land and make it a refuge from oppression for any people, sect, or nation within it (*ay sha 'b wa-madhab wa-umma kānu*). Why shouldn't the Lebanese have their own state, if that is their aspiration?"<sup>349</sup> When Crane and King pressed Huwayyik on the question of French protection, (asking specifically, "protection from who, exactly?") Huwayyik responded that French "protection" over Lebanon was about building a sovereign state that places all groups under a

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<sup>347</sup> Before 1919, Lebanese nationalist organizations (including the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*) carried white flags with bearing a green Lebanese cedar. Mukarzil's modification of the design accompanied petitioned proclaiming Lebanese support for a French Mandate over the *Grand Liban*. D. n. 4, Original. M.A.E., *E-Levant 1918-1940, Syrie-Liban*. In Hokayem, Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, 621-623.

<sup>348</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations* (New York, Perseus Books, 2010), 195-6.

<sup>349</sup> "Nazar 'Am fi-Hawadith Khama A'wam," *al-Tahalluf al-Lubnani* (Buenos Aires) January 23, 1920, 17-8.

single national system, another hallmark idea of secular Lebanese nationalism, particularly that of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*.<sup>350</sup> Patriarch Huwayyik's meeting with the King-Crane Commission was his first intervention into the politics of the Paris Peace Conference, and he was then careful to represent himself as a spokesman for a Lebanese nation defined in secular terms. In the coming weeks, however, the French Foreign Ministry would propose that the Patriarch bring a Second Lebanese Delegation to Paris. As plans for this delegation progressed into Fall 1919, it became clear that the Church's role in the politics of the Conférence drove a wedge between Lebanese nationalists of two camps: the secularists of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*, and the Francophile pro-clerical Maronite nationalists of the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*.

The Second Lebanese Delegation was scheduled to meet with the Conférence in October 1919, and, eager to demonstrate that the Patriarch's delegation represented Lebanese public opinion, the French Foreign Ministry solicited petitions and letters of support from Lebanese communities across the *mahjar*. Many such letters poured into the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke from Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and the United States, where they were bound together for presentation to the Paris Peace Conference as proof of the diaspora's endorsement for an independent Lebanon.<sup>351</sup> Mukarzil's *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* organized a letter writing campaign in support of Huwayyik's delegation, and chapters from across the Americas authorized the Patriarch to represent the party's interest in creating the "absolute independence of Mount Lebanon, the return of its ancient borders, under the fraternal protection of France."<sup>352</sup> In October 1919, Mukarzil returned to Paris once again, and he accompanied the Second Lebanese Delegation as formal representative for the American *mahjar*.

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<sup>350</sup> "Nazar 'Am fi-Hawadith Khama A'wam," 18.

<sup>351</sup> 10 June 1919 Letter from *Sociedade La Union Libanense* of Mendoza to Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik; Huwayyik Collection, Folder 89, Document 162; Maronite Patriarchate, Bkerke, Lebanon.

<sup>352</sup> 1 October 1919 Letter from Yusuf Hanna, president of the *Liga Libanense* in Merida to Patriarch Huwayyik,

But the Church's involvement in the Paris Peace Conference was far from a settled issue, and there were many Lebanese nationalists in the *mahjar* who were deeply unhappy to have a member of the clergy representing their movement. This was particularly the case among supporters of the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani*, which had supported Daud 'Ammun's first Delegation and saw no need for a second one. Many *Ittihad Lubnani* leaders saw the Patriarch's presence in Paris as a threat to the authority of the Administrative Council at Ba'abda, a constitutive assembly active since late Ottoman times and which the party hoped would form the nucleus of a Lebanese parliamentary assembly after the War. A June 1919 letter to Patriarch Huwayyik written by a *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* affiliate in Brazil Ibrahim al-Bakhkhash reveals his fear that secular Lebanese nationalism was being edged out by two flank movements: a Hashimite Arab nationalism whose partisans denied the viability of an independent Lebanese entity, and the Francophile Maronite nationalism that envisioned greater Lebanon as a Christian state in a Muslim region.<sup>353</sup>

Eager to support Huwayyik's delegation, São Paulo newspaper editor and *Nahda Lubnaniyya* founder Shukri al-Khuri published a series of articles justifying Huwayyik's involvement in his political daily, *Abu al-Hawl*. One such article argued that the Church's philanthropic efforts and activism during the War more than justified Huwayyik's attendance in the peace proceedings. Al-Khuri argued that the *Ittihad Lubnani*'s objections to Huwayyik had less to do with a difference in political opinion ("after all, they also say that Istanbul had infringed on Lebanese freedoms and rights") but with the notion that Huwayyik's role as a

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Lebanese Emigration Research Center Digital Archives; Also a 20 June 1919 letter from Habib al-Khuri and the *Comité Syria Pro-Independencia da Syria* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Al-Khuri sends a token donation to Huwayyik to offset costs incurred during the second Lebanese delegation. He pledges his group's support and vest Huwayyik with the right to represent the Rio de Janeiro Lebanese that October; Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 089, Document 064.

<sup>353</sup> 20 July 1919 Letter from Ibrahim al-Bakhkhash to Huwayyik, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 089, Document 0169.

religious head would present a conflict of interest for Lebanese secular nationalism. Interestingly, al-Khuri resorts not to Christian religious nationalism to counter the *Ittihad's* claims, but instead presents the Patriarch as a secular leader and representative for the Lebanese community.<sup>354</sup>

During the war, the Patriarch “raised and distributed 1 million lira,” among both Maronites and other groups in Mount Lebanon, and while “he is the religious head of the Maronite sect, the Patriarch's role has been both religious and civil since time immemorial.”<sup>355</sup> Furthermore, Khuri emphasized that the Great Powers (and particularly the French) had sought out the Patriarch as the arbiter “for Lebanese near and far (*al-qarīb wa-l-gharīb*),” in matters “both religious and political.”<sup>356</sup> For al-Khuri, opposing the Patriarch's delegation on the grounds that he represented the Church undermined the secular aspects to Huwayyik's agenda. That al-Khuri foregrounded the secular nature of the Delegation's agenda (despite its clerical composition) demonstrates the degree to which his Lebanese nationalist leadership remained divided over the proper role of Maronite clergy in politics. That said, *Abu al-Hawl* endorsed the Second Lebanese delegation as well as the French mandate that followed. Meanwhile, the *Nahda* raised funds to cover Huwayyik's personal expenses while in Paris: Boston chapter Secretary Yusuf Habib al-Qamar sent a payment of 222 “riyal” and applauded Huwayyik's efforts “to demand the independence of Greater Lebanon.”<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Shukri al-Khuri, “al-Batrirk al-Maruni wa-Ta'ifihi,” *Abu al-Hawl* 176 (s.d.), 7; clipping in Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 087, Document 390.

<sup>355</sup> Khuri, “al-Batrirk al-Mārūnī wa-Ṭā'ifihi,” Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 087, Document 390.

<sup>356</sup> Khuri, “al-Batrirk al-Mārūnī wa-Ṭā'ifihi,” Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 087, Document 390.

<sup>357</sup> The currency referred to here is unknown; in the Bkerke letters the word *riyāl* is used to variously to dollars, pounds, francs, pesos, in addition to the Ottoman riyal. This presents a problem when dealing with emigrant remittances and relief work in the Levant, and indeed one finds contemporary cases of misunderstanding where the mother Church and diasporic donors disagree on amounts of funding actually sent; Letter (s.d. Received 22 April 1920) from Yusuf Habib al-Qamr of Boston's *al-Muntada al-Lubnani* to Patriarch Huwayyik, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 087, Document 0188.

Resentment against French authorities seeking signatures of support of Huwayyik's delegation was also common. In Santiago, Chile, the French consul found himself completely unable to find supporters for the Patriarch's delegation. Rather than a petition of support for the second Lebanese Delegation, Chile's *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* sent a letter of protest. When given the ultimatum to either support the Patriarch or lose their vote, they drafted a telegram to the French, saying that left "without a true delegate," the Lebanese of Chile "unanimously resolve to entrust defense of their interests to (Stephen) Pichon."<sup>358</sup> Among Lebanese nationalists, the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* was the largest, most organized source of opposition to the Church's delegation, but it was not the only such source. Several break-away political parties, local organizations, and individual Maronite activists wrote letters to the Maronite Patriarch protesting the Second Lebanese Delegation, the Church's partnership with France, and the notion of a *Grand Liban* distinct from Syria. The *Hizb al-Watani al-Lubnani* [Lebanese National Party] of "America," for example, implored Patriarch Huwayyik not to cooperate with the French or any foreign power for Lebanese independence; Western partners would bring only Western economic interests, resulting in "economic occupation" of the land.<sup>359</sup> Before the war, the *Hizb al-Watani al-Lubnani* concluded, the Lebanese nationalist movement had focused on "making Lebanese men lords of their own land." Now, it seemed that Parisian high politics had unjustly taken the fore.

As the diaspora roiled in claims and counterclaims about clerical involvement, Huwayyik's delegation presented its plan on 27 October 1919. Citing letters of support from

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<sup>358</sup> MAE, SL, Gilbert to Pichon, Valparaiso, 2 September 1919. Hokayem, 'Atallah, and Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques*, 474.

<sup>359</sup> The letter does not specify where in "America" (North or South) the party operated, and an annotation in the margin reveals that the clergyman charged with filing the letter was confounded as to where it should go. 15 September 1919 letter from Najla Yusuf, Hanna al-Safra and the *Hizb al-Watani al-Lubnani* to Patriarch Huwayyik, Lebanese Emigration Research Center Digital Archives.

Lebanese institutions in the Levant and the *Nahda's* campaign abroad, the Patriarch endorsed the territorial claims of the *Grand Liban* and the principle of French protection.<sup>360</sup> A month later French Minister Georges Clemenceau presented a letter to Patriarch Huwayyik that included an official recognition of Lebanon's independence and the terms of the second Lebanese delegation.<sup>361</sup> This outcome was a moment of triumph for both the Church and the Lebanese independence movement abroad, but it also specifically cemented a bond of patronage and representative authority between the Patriarch and his diasporic partners, presenting Huwayyik with new responsibilities to provide for a political constituency living abroad.

### *Conclusions*

By tracing the political activism of a transnational network of Syrian and Lebanese journalists living in the Americas, this chapter has analyzed the emergence of reformist political committees through the press and their progression into competing Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab nationalist political parties during World War I. The close relationship between these political organizations and a transnational Syrian press then reaching a degree of syndication made newspapers a powerful place to appeal to a *mahjari* “public,” and eventually to make claims to represent that public as a national community. Syrian and Lebanese journalists living abroad were simultaneously leaders of diasporic political parties, and their access to the media and to the diplomatic networks of the Entente made these men attractive partners for international relief efforts and military recruitment campaigns. By War’s end, many of these activists promoted partnership with one or more Western powers as a means of safeguarding a post-Ottoman political future for Syria or Lebanese, variously defined.

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<sup>360</sup> Loheac, *Daoud Ammoun et l'etat libanais*, 76.

<sup>361</sup> Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, 14.

But the same transnational alliances that gave these political organizations strength during the War transformed into a complicated set of political entanglements shortly after 1918, especially as France moved to assert a Mandate over Syria and Lebanon and to establish a separate greater Lebanese state. New fractures within and between the Syrian and Lebanese nationalist movements in the *mahjar* ultimately gave France the upper hand in sponsoring their choice of allies at the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference. The increasing allure of Hashimite Arab nationalism among the pan-Syrianists once supportive of Shukri Ghanim, on one hand, and that of the overtly Maronite nationalist and Francophile *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*, on the other, fundamentally altered the discussions heard in Paris concerning Syria's political future.

Uninterested in actively endorsing an independent Hashimite Arab Kingdom centered on Damascus and including Mount Lebanon, the League of Nations ultimately ruled in favor of a French Mandate at San Remo in April 1920. Within weeks, French troops amassed in Beirut, planning an offensive against Emir Faysal as he hastened to create an Arab state in defiance of the League's ruling. Gouraud campaigned into Syria, meeting Faysal's men at Maysalun in July 1920, routing them and putting an end to Faysal's monarchy in Damascus. That September, Gouraud declared the establishment of the *Grand Liban*, abolished the Administrative Council at Ba'abda, and in 1921 announced that greater Lebanon would have its first formal census. As the following chapter shows, the Lebanese census of 1921 would set important precedents in the Lebanese state's project to assert a coherent national identity, and the inclusion of emigrants transformed them into stakeholders in Lebanese politics.

### CHAPTER 3: MANDATING THE MAHJAR: THE LEBANESE CENSUS OF 1921 AND THE EMERGENCE OF A TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENRY ABROAD

The arrival of Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik in Paris in October 1919 marked a significant turning point in the plan for a greater Lebanese state. As head of the Lebanese Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, Patriarch Huwayyik appealed for a greater Lebanese state incorporating historical Mount Lebanon with the fertile Bīqā' valley and the former sanjaks of Beirut, Saida, and Tripoli, thus reiterating the principle demands of Daud Ammun's First Lebanese Delegation eight months earlier.<sup>362</sup> He additionally endorsed French tutelage over Mount Lebanon on the basis of France's "traditional" role as protector of Lebanese Christians in an overwhelmingly Muslim part of the world.<sup>363</sup> The Patriarch's appeal to the Conference in late 1919 cemented what would become a long-term pattern of cooperation between the Maronite Church and the French Mandatory government of greater Lebanon. A year after Patriarch Huwayyik's audience in Paris, the French general Henri Gouraud would formally announce the establishment of the *Grand Liban* in Beirut in September 1920. Seated at his right was the aging Patriarch of the Maronite Church, who represented Lebanese Maronites both in Lebanese territory and beyond at the 1920 ceremony; a Lebanese flag (a cedar superimposed on a French tricolor) hanged over the efficient, its design also created abroad.<sup>364</sup> The state of Lebanon was defined along territorial lines, lines which encompassed a religiously diverse population of former Ottoman subjects, many of which contested both its borders as well as France's right to

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<sup>362</sup> M.A.E., E-Levant 1918-1940, Syrie-Liban. 13 February 1919. Statement from the First Lebanese Delegation to the Conférence de la Paix. In Antoine Hokayem, Daad Bou Malhab 'Atallah, and Jean Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français relatifs à l'histoire du Liban et de la Syrie à l'époque du Mandat, Vol. 1: Le Démantèlement de l'Empire Ottoman et les préludes du mandat* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2003), 479-481.

<sup>363</sup> See Asher Kaufmann, "Phoenicianism: the Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2001); 185.

<sup>364</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani: li-tidhkar yubil al-Nahḍa al-Lubnaniyya al-Fuddi, 1911-1936* (New York: Matba'at al-Huda, 1936), 108-9.



protect them. As French High Commissioner in his new office in Beirut, General Gouraud faced a few pertinent questions: who were the “Lebanese”? Who counted as Lebanese: the people living within the *Grand Liban* (some of who denied the new state’s viability), or Lebanon’s diaspora, then numbering some 25 percent of its population?<sup>365</sup> Any French attempt to define the Lebanese, he concluded, would require a population study, but in the absence of a transnational administrative infrastructure linking all of Lebanon’s scattered populations abroad, who would do the counting?

This chapter takes a close look at the first Lebanese census of 1921, one of the French Mandate’s first points of contact with the Lebanese population it sought to administer. Among historians, remarkably little is known about the 1921 census, save that (in the words of Stephen Longrigg) its results were considered “highly imperfect, for the reasons... of concealment, misunderstanding, falsification, conjecture, and motives peculiar to communities which in such countries always prevent accurate personal registration.”<sup>366</sup>



Figure 6: General Gouraud and Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik at Proclamation of the *Grand Liban*, 1920. Source: Mukarzil, *al-Kitab al-Lubnani*, 128.

<sup>365</sup> Charles Issawi, “The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1800-1914,” in Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds., *Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration* (London: I.B. Taurus and Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 31.

<sup>366</sup> Stephen Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 127-8; the most extensive work in English on the Lebanese Censuses (of 1921 and 1932) is Rania Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are the Lebanese?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 224-252.

From the outset, French authorities were pressed between a set of countervailing concerns, the desire to maintain the political supremacy of French partners in the Mandate (particularly the Maronite Church) versus the terms of the League of Nations Mandate that charged France with building representative administrative infrastructure in Lebanon. Looking at the 1921 census, this chapter argues that France pursued Lebanese Maronite emigrants into the diaspora, enumerating them alongside residents as a means of preserving (perhaps even creating) a Christian demographic majority for the new Lebanese state as well as protecting Maronite political preeminence within that emerging political order. It demonstrates that the French High Commissioner's office in Beirut employed the Maronites Church to conduct a portion of the 1921 census, specifically to enumerate Lebanese Maronites living in the Americas for inclusion in the count. The Church's involvement in the census bore significant consequences for all concerned parties: the French Mandatory government created the demographic ratio it saw as favorable to the continuation of its rule in Beirut, the Maronite Church used the census as an opportunity to further expand its authority over its flock living abroad; and for Lebanese emigrants, their registration in the 1921 census created new expectations that as citizens abroad, they would be consulted in Lebanese elections and political affairs. In attempting to define who was "Lebanese," the census of 1921 raised new questions about what kind of obligations bound the emigrants to the homeland under French Mandate.

Chapter 2 showed the means by which Syrian and Lebanese journalists in the *mahjar* participated in nationalist activism and military recruitment during World War I, and in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference which soon followed. By "claim(ing) membership in a political community that stretched beyond the territorial borders of the homeland,"<sup>367</sup> activists in the

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<sup>367</sup> Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism in the Search for Home* (Durham: Duke University press, 2001), 4, 20.

*majjar* created distinctly long-distance Syrian and Lebanese nationalisms. But long-distance nationalism, as Nina Glick Schiller conceives it in *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, was never singularly about emigrants and exiles laying claim to the homeland. States, institutions, and individuals “at home” also lay claim to the diaspora when it becomes politically meaningful to do so.<sup>368</sup> Thus, this chapter approaches both the production of the 1921 Lebanese census (its methodology, collection of data, its applications) and the results of the census within the grander project of the Mandate’s administrative development. By domesticating the diaspora, or “mandating the *mahjar*,” both the French Mandatory government in Beirut and the Maronite Church (in different contexts and for varied reasons) could extent their political authority into Lebanese communities abroad. In turn, however, the Mandate’s inclusion of emigrants in the census encouraged new patterns of transnational substantive citizenship and claims-making by Lebanese emigrants upon the French Mandatory state.

*The French Mandate and its Census: Who are the Lebanese?*

For Patriarch Huwayyik, Gouraud's September 1920 proclamation of the *Grand Liban* within enlarged borders under French mandate was a political victory and a confirmation of the Great Powers' support for a Christian state in the Middle East. However, the Lebanese territory's demographic realities did not coincide with the image of a Christian fortress in a Muslim region. In both the coastal cities and the Biqa' Valley annexed to the new state, Muslims comprised the majority, and most of them were deeply unhappy about being separated from the Syrian hinterland (as were some Christians). Historians of the early Mandate usually point to the contradiction within the Lebanese nationalist movement's two stances: the enlargement of Lebanon's borders, and the maintenance of a Christian majority. While diasporic opponents to

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<sup>368</sup> Schiller and Fourn, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 110-12.

Lebanon's political separation from Syria (most notably George Samné) urged that the new state either abandon its claim to a Christian national identity or else accept a reduction of its territory, the French mandatory authorities and the Maronite Church proposed alternative measures.<sup>369</sup> In 1921, France sought to limit the continuing emigration of Lebanese Christians, which quickly resumed after the War and which threatened the demographic balance the High Commissioner sought to preserve.<sup>370</sup> At the same time, the High Commissioner announced in early 1921 his desire for an administrative census to enumerate the Lebanese, including those living abroad.<sup>371</sup>

The Lebanese Mandate conducted two official censuses, in 1921 and 1932. The 1921 census established the country's electoral districts and set up the confessional distribution of seats in the 1922 Representative Council, the administrative body that replaced the Ottoman-era Administrative Council abolished by France in 1920.<sup>372</sup> Stuck between the twin objectives of building a democratic Republic and sponsoring a state with a Christian-majority leadership, French High Commissioner Gouraud opted to include tax-paying Lebanese emigrants in the census as part of their districts of origin, boosting Christian numbers in mixed areas, especially in the mountainous zones that had seen the most extensive emigration.<sup>373</sup> In a February 1921 letter circulated by the French consulates across the Americas, Gouraud emphasized the census as an administrative matter catered to “the interests and intentions to Syrians and Lebanese

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<sup>369</sup> Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 112-3.

<sup>370</sup> Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 100.

<sup>371</sup> Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, 127.

<sup>372</sup> “Les élections municipales au Grand Liban,” *Correspondence d’Orient* 237-8, 15-30 June 1922, 337; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 44; Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, 127; Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 77-8; Denise Ammoun, *Histoire du Liban Contemporain* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 268.

<sup>373</sup> Rania Maktabi argues that Gouraud’s assumption was that tax paying emigrants were likely to return to Lebanon, either temporarily or permanently, and that emigrants in arrears were not likely to return. Maktabi, “State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon: The Politics of Membership and Exclusion in a Sectarian State,” *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, eds. Nils August Butenschon, Uri Davis, and Manuel Sarkis Hassassian (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 148.

abroad to maintain a link with their place of origin.” The voluntary registration of “all Lebanese (emigrants) who so request it” afforded France with a supportive and “numerically significant” national constituency abroad.<sup>374</sup> It additionally provided the High Commissioner's Office with data to be mined for the solution to Lebanon's continuing emigration problem: by facilitating informal networks of diplomacy between the Mandate and its diaspora via the French consulate system, the government could inquire into remedies for Lebanese emigration.

Carried out between March and December 1921, Gouraud's census of 1921 set important precedents for the well-documented census of 1932: it enumerated emigrants alongside residents, it over-reported Christian populations and under-reported Lebanon's Muslims, and for Lebanese living abroad, it presaged access to formal Lebanese citizenship.<sup>375</sup> France's insistence that the census was “purely administrative” prompted many Muslims to refrain “from registering as Lebanese subjects because registration could be interpreted as a recognition of the Lebanese state.”<sup>376</sup> The Muslim boycott and France's decision to count Lebanese emigrants led to the conclusion that Christians constituted 55 percent of Lebanese population in 1921, compared to Muslims at 45 percent.<sup>377</sup> In each of Lebanon's administrative districts, Muslims constituted a numerical majority, but the apportionment of elected seats in the Representative Council was made on ratio reached by the census: six Christians to five Muslims (6:5).<sup>378</sup> Comparable ratios would be repeated in the 1932 Census and the 1943 National Pact.<sup>379</sup> Given that population data

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<sup>374</sup> 9 February 1921 Telegram Circulaire du Président du Conseil aux Agents Diplomatiques et Consulaires de la République Française en Amérique. M.A.E., E-Levant 1918-1929, Syrie-Liban, Vol. 130, ff. 81bis-83bis. Reproduced in Eliane Fersan, *L'Émigration Libanaise aux États-Unis: d'Après les Archives du Ministère de Affaires Étrangères de France* (Ph.D. Thesis, Université Saint-Espirit de Kaslik, 2006), 163-4.

<sup>375</sup> Maktabi, “State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon,” 148.

<sup>376</sup> Maktabi, “State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon,” 161

<sup>377</sup> Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 98.

<sup>378</sup> Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 98.

<sup>379</sup> In 1932's census, a clause was added that in order to be counted Lebanese must be able to provide proof of residency for the date of August 31, 1924, Simultaneously, Lebanese who could provide documentation of their participation in 1921's census had been awarded with the required residency status, and as a result were recounted in

from 1921's census was reused and referenced in 1932, it is important to address the census's methodological aspects.

The census's registrants were arranged along three planes, classified by sect, village (or village of origin), and by heads of household. The French Mandate government borrowed this principle from their understanding (or misunderstandings) of Ottoman precedent. For much of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had classified its subjects according to their millet, a useful method because tax rates and many other responsibilities exchanged between the Sultan and his subjects (conscription, for instance) were in accordance with their belonging to a distinct millet.<sup>380</sup> Edmund Burke III and more recently, Benjamin Thomas White argue that France brought to its Syrian and Lebanese mandates a significant misperception: informed by Marshall Lyautey's colonial principle of "association" (which dictated that colonial peoples are best governed according to their own laws and traditions),<sup>381</sup> High Commissioner Gouraud incorporated sect into the Lebanese census, conflating it with the Ottoman idea of the millet.<sup>382</sup> These two categories—"sect" and "millet"—are distinct in important ways. First, French conflations of the organizing principles underwrote more generalized assumptions that the religiously diverse groups in Syria and Lebanon had been, since time immemorial, in a state of constant religious conflict.<sup>383</sup> This assumption was particularly acute between Christians and Muslims. Such assumptions mattered immensely as France began to build administrative

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1932 regardless of whether they were in Lebanon or abroad. Thus, emigrants that departed Lebanon prior 1921 contributed to the 6:5 ratio used in 1943's National Pact, despite that they had been long ineligible for Lebanese citizenship; Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census Of 1932 Revisited," 225-6.

<sup>380</sup> Stanford Shaw, "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1978): 327-8.

<sup>381</sup> Edmund Burke III, "A Comprehensive View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syriam 1912-1925," *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 3 (1973), 175-86; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 55-7.

<sup>382</sup> Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 47-9.

<sup>383</sup> White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East*, 45-6.

infrastructure for greater Lebanon; the focus was on balancing sectarian interests through accommodation of older legal norms more than on the development of a secular, common citizenship. For the same reason, the Mandate delegated personal status laws and other legal issues to the respective religious courts (with the exception of the *awqaf*, over which the High Commissioner retained oversight.)<sup>384</sup> Second, France's self-perception as the historical "protector" of Lebanese Christians (particularly of their Maronite partners) not only informed the Mandate's classification of Lebanese into confessional groups but also the integration of a confessional logic into Lebanon's early representative structures.<sup>385</sup>

Registration with the 1921 census was often an individual's first formal contact with the French Mandate. The receipts given in exchange for registering became first proof of relationship with the new Lebanese entity, and they were offer to registrants with the expectation that the Lebanese living abroad would ultimately return to Lebanon.<sup>386</sup> In the Americas, many Lebanese Maronite registered enthusiastically, eager to obtain new documentation that could replace their now-antiquated Ottoman passports. But conducting a Lebanese census in the expansive American *mahjar* required access to transnational networks of trust and cooperation that French Mandatory officials in Beirut did not directly control. The French would have to solicit institutional partners for the census project. High Commissioner Gouraud delegated the registration of Lebanese emigrants to religious authorities already operating in Lebanese communities in the Americas, particularly the Maronite Church and its Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik. The Maronite Church participated in several aspects of the Lebanese census of 1921,

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<sup>384</sup> Article 6 of the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, "Annexe II: Société des Nations, Mandat pour la Syrie et le Liban," in Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Rapport sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Juillet 1922-Juillet 1923* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1923) 58.

<sup>385</sup> White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East*, 53.

<sup>386</sup> 9 February 1921 Télégramme Circulaire du Président du Conseil aux Agents Diplomatiques et Consulaires de la République Française en Amérique. M.A.E., E-Levant 1918-1929, Syrie-Liban, Vol. 130, ff. 81bis-83bis; Fersan, *L'Émigration Libanaise aux États-Unis*, 163.

collecting data for the Mandatory state but also using the project as a chance to reorganize the Maronite Church and project its influence further into the Lebanese communities abroad.

Gouraud's decision to rely on the Church to enumerate Lebanese emigrants raises questions about the various political, ecclesiastical, and personal agendas this project set at play. Who counted the Lebanese abroad in 1921? How was it done? How was the census data used beyond the confines of Lebanon's electoral politics? What political partnerships formed as a result?

*The Maronite Church as Census-Taker: Enumerating the Emigrant Faithful*

The Maronite Patriarchate was intimately involved with the counting of Lebanese emigrants, and letters between Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik and High Commissioner Gouraud suggest that the Maronite Church began registering Lebanese abroad even before the census formally began. Shortly after the French High Commissioners announcement of the census in February 1921,<sup>387</sup> the Patriarchate in Bkerke sent Maronite Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri on an expedition to the Americas to tour the diaspora's Maronite communities and report on the state of the Church; the trip lasted over two years and brought the Archbishop to New York, through the United States, to Canada, and finally to Latin and South America. al-Khuri's orders were to meet with local Maronite clergy and lay community leaders to enumerate Lebanese Maronites and appraise the clergy's progress in each emigrant community.<sup>388</sup>

Although Patriarch Huwayyik was aware of the French High Commissioner's decree for a Lebanese census, Archbishop al-Khuri boarded a steamship in Beirut with the resolve that his mission was ecclesiastical in nature; only after his arrival in New York did the French government seek the Church's assistance in registering Lebanese populations for the Mandate's

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<sup>387</sup> MAE, *E-Levant 1918-1929, Syrie-Liban*, Copy of French Foreign Ministry to French Consulates in the Americas, 19 February 1921, Vol. 130, 81-83.

<sup>388</sup> Georges Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States* (Zouk Musbih, Lebanon: Notre Dame University of Louaize Press, 1993), 88-9.



census of 1921.<sup>389</sup> In a 6 April letter, the French consul in New York sent al-Khuri a formal register, asking him to categorize emigrants according to sect and village of origin, and to enumerate households as well as raw numbers.<sup>390</sup> The High Commissioner also sought the names of household heads where possible, a prerequisite for the registration papers that were being prepared in Beirut. The French consul concluded in their correspondence with al-Khuri that such registration was necessary to assist France “in everything it undertakes to protect your compatriots in the most effective way possible.”<sup>391</sup>

Across the Americas, Maronite clergy were alerted to send the requested information regarding their congregations to al-Khuri's dormitory at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York. Along with the census data came commentary on the state of local Maronite religious practice. Al-Khuri amalgamated this data and remitted it to two offices: it went first to the French Consulates in New York and Washington DC, and also to the Patriarch's compound in Bkerke, where Patriarch Huwayyik planned a reformation of the Maronite Church in the Americas. The census was a joint effort, a partnership made by French authorities and the Maronite Patriarchate in the name of identifying, embracing, and ultimately governing Lebanon's non-resident national constituents. It shaped both governmental and clerical policy towards the diaspora while further cementing the partnership between the Church and the Mandatory state.

In the weeks that followed, discussions between Maronite clergy and the French government reveal important mismatches in agendas. The paramount question was who to count: the French Consul asked al-Khuri for help in counting “all Syrians and Lebanese in our

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<sup>389</sup> 6 April 1921 Letter from French Consul in New York to Father Joseph Wakim and Rrchbishop Shukralla al-Khuri, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0016.

<sup>390</sup> Appendix to 6 April 1921 Letter from French Consul in New York to Father Joseph Wakim and Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Documents 0016-2 and 0016-3.

<sup>391</sup> 6 April 1921 Letter from French Consul in New York to Father Joseph Wakim and Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0016.

jurisdiction (the United States),” of all sects and religions, but the Archbishop's orders from Bkerke remained to count Lebanese Maronites abroad for the Church's purposes. With limited access to the Lebanese diaspora, the French Mandatory government had to work through their clerical partners to obtain the data they required; al-Khuri agreed to collect data on Maronites for French authorities, but he concluded that “I regret only that I can offer imperfect numbers, offering more exact figures for the Maronites, the object of my visit to America.”<sup>392</sup>

Because the Mandatory authorities contracted this part of the census out to religious figures like Archbishop al-Khuri, the accuracy of the data they compiled hinged upon their ability to locate and access willing census-takers. al-Khuri offered data on Lebanese Maronites and offered to help locate Orthodox and Melkite institutions in New York, emphasizing the demographic strength of Lebanese Christians in the United States.<sup>393</sup> In the same letter, al-Khuri concluded that “with respect to other, non-Christian Syrians-- Jews, Druze, Muslims-- I do not know for certain, but I think they are very few in number.”<sup>394</sup> To the contrary, in 1921 there were numerous communities of Lebanese Muslims and Druze in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas. These communities had their own societies, newspapers, and social institutions.<sup>395</sup> They were visible participants in Lebanese political culture: the political daily *al-Bayan*, operated by Suleiman Baddur in New York City, had a distribution comparable to *Mirat al-*

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<sup>392</sup> Draft of 1 May 1921 Letter from Shukralla al-Khuri to French Consul in New York, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0163.

<sup>393</sup> Philip Hitti's 1924 estimates for each of these rites were Maronites: 90,000; Greek Orthodox: 85,000; and Melkites: 10,000; rendering a ratio of 9:8:1. Hitti, *The Syrians in America*, 62.

<sup>394</sup> Draft of May 1, 1921 Letter from Shukralla al-Khuri to French Consul in New York, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection Folder 096, Document 0164.

<sup>395</sup> ‘Amr Ibrahim al-Qandilchi, *al-‘Arab fi-l-Mahjar: Wujduhum, Sihafatuhum, Jam‘iyyatuhum* (Baghdad: Manshurat Wizarat al-A‘lam, 1977), 11-18. Henri Melki discusses Druze and Muslims organizations linked to *al-Bayan* newspaper in New York City in Melki, *al-Sihafa al-‘Arabiyya fi-l-Mahjar*. Its editor was Suleiman Baddur, a pro-Hamidian Lebanese Druze who opposed the CUP until the World War, and promoted the Ottoman government of Cemal Pasha after 1914. Baddur was primarily concerned about the spectre of foreign interference in the Mashriq, and the Entente’s supporters in the Americas. *Al-Fatat*, New York City’s Arabist newspaper, had a mixed set of contributors, primarily Sunni and Greek Orthodox.

*Gharb*, *al-Sa‘ih*, and *al-Sha‘b* newspapers.<sup>396</sup> *Al-Bayan* had a Druze editor, a mixed Druze and Sunni set of columnists, and an Arab nationalist outlook very much at odds with French rule in Syria and Lebanon as well as with the census project of 1921.<sup>397</sup> The publication ran continuously from the late Ottoman period through Independence, and would have been a highly-visible focal point for the Syrian colony’s non-Christian population as well as those who opposed the Mandate. Precise population numbers, however, have not been possible to ascertain. Those included in the 1921 census are almost certainly incorrect because Lebanese Muslims and many Druze abroad boycotted the census effort.<sup>398</sup> Other contemporary commentators—Philip Hitti, the U.S. census of 1920—did not use sect as an organizing principle in their estimates.

By 1 May (a month into the project), Archbishop al-Khuri could personally account for 16,000 Maronites living in the northeastern United States, the bulk of which resided in New York and Massachusetts.<sup>399</sup> For reasons not entirely clear, however, he submitted a regional estimate of 25,000 Maronites living in the northeastern United States to the French government.<sup>400</sup> He estimated a grand total of 55,000 Maronites for the entire country.<sup>401</sup> These numbers were highly speculative, rough estimates on al-Khuri’s part to conform to a rushed 1

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<sup>396</sup> Melki, *al-Sihafa al-‘Arabiyya fi-l-Mahjar*, 101.

<sup>397</sup> In 1919, for instance, Suleiman Baddur promoted the idea of an alliance between the United States of America and the Hashimite Arab Nationalist movement under Emir Faysal, an idea that appeared in various iterations in New York shortly after WWI. *al-Bayan*’s tagline at the time was “No Protection except for American Protection” [lā ḥimāya illā ḥimāya al-wilāyāt al-mutaḥida]. Melki, *al-Sihafa al-‘Arabiyya fi-l-Mahjar*, 104.

<sup>398</sup> That said, the 1921 census recorded a total of 2,937 Sunnis, 1,787 Shi‘is, and 1,174 Druze living outside of Lebanon.

<sup>399</sup> This estimate comes from a worksheet that al-Khuri prepared on 30 April 1921; however, al-Khuri excluded an estimated 500 Maronites in New Jersey, and had not yet visited Vermont’s parishioners. The figures given for New York and Massachusetts (7,500 and 5,977 respectively) are likely accurate and are confirmed by the secondary literature. His curious attribution of 500 for New Jersey, and then scratching out of this group, raises further questions. Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, document 0161.

<sup>400</sup> Draft of May 1, 1921 Letter from Shukralla al-Khuri to French Consul in New York, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection Folder 096, document 0163-4.

<sup>401</sup> George Labaki explains that archbishop al-Khuri could later account for 40,000 Lebanese Maronites in the United States, and that his addition of 15,000 more was to account for those not registered or otherwise lost during the process of the census. Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, 60.

May deadline set by the French High Commissioner's office. By that date, many of the Church's American parishes had yet to reply to al-Khuri's request for population data. The archbishop's decision to round up based on an incomplete data set likely reflects his concern to build the case for his sect's numerical supremacy in the Americas.

Although it is clear that faced with a stiff French deadline, Archbishop al-Khuri submitted population data that was incoherent or incomplete at best, what is less clear is whether his estimate was incorrect. When al-Khuri's figures are compared to other sources of population data for the Syrian and Lebanese American communities, a mixed picture emerges. For instance, the firmest numbers al-Khuri could present to the French Consulate in May 1921 concerned the Lebanese Maronites living in New York and Massachusetts, perhaps an unsurprising revelation given that these two states had the largest Syrian and Lebanese communities as well as an extensive network of Maronite churches by 1921. But in both states, al-Khuri's numbers prove unreliable. In 1921, the archbishop reported that 7,500 Lebanese Maronites lived in New York and another 5,977 in Massachusetts.<sup>402</sup> The U.S. census conducted just months earlier in 1920, however, enumerated the Syrian and Lebanese population of New York at only 7,760, all religions and sects combined.<sup>403</sup> This discrepancy is even more severe in Massachusetts: al-Khuri reported registering 5,977 Lebanese Maronites, but the U.S. census only found 3,150 total Syrian and Lebanese immigrants state wide a year earlier.<sup>404</sup> The discrepancy cannot be explained by Lebanese aliens being left out of the U.S. census (in included aliens and naturalized immigrants), nor by Lebanese immigrants dodging the census takers. Indeed, Syrian and Lebanese immigrant groups encouraged the community to register for the U.S. census; the

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<sup>402</sup> 30 April 1921 worksheet in Archbishop al-Khuri's hand; Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0161.

<sup>403</sup> Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, via Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 49.

<sup>404</sup> Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, via Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 49.

Syrian American Club (which had branches in both New York and Massachusetts) even saw in the American census a means of documenting Syrian aliens in preparation for this naturalization in the United States.<sup>405</sup> Such inconsistencies between the archbishop's numbers and those of the U.S. census cast doubts over their accuracy.

On the other hand, a comparison of al-Khuri's data with more rigorous attempts by historians to assess the size of the Syrian and Lebanese communities in the United States make the archbishop's numbers appear conservative if anything. From May to August 1921, additional data continued to arrive at al-Khuri's Brooklyn dormitory, and it is unlikely that the Archbishop's estimate of 55,000 Maronites in the United States was artificially inflated. Just one year before, the U.S. General Commissioner of Immigration had issued a report confirming the arrival of 89,971 Syrians and Lebanese (of all sects) between 1899 and 1919.<sup>406</sup> Reporting in 1924, Philip Hitti estimated some 200,000 Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinian immigrants, if taking the Immigration Commission's numbers in comparison with Syrians arriving between 1880 and 1899.<sup>407</sup> More recent attempts by historians to enumerate Syrians and Lebanese in the United States conclude that around 105,000 (of all religions and sects) Syrians lived there by 1924. There is a sizable degree of variation between these figures, but the idea that Lebanese Maronites might constitute roughly half of the lowest population estimate (50,000 out of 89,000) is certainly too conservative.<sup>408</sup> It is also generally noted that the Maronites constituted the largest

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<sup>405</sup> Between 1915 and 1922, the Syrian American Club prepared Declarations of Intent for hundreds of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants and assisted with all aspects of naturalization, mediating between the Immigration Board, the U.S. court system, and individual immigrants themselves. Dozens of these applications are preserved within the Syrian American Club Records, Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI.

<sup>406</sup> *Annual Report Commissioner General Immigration*, 1919, 168.

<sup>407</sup> Philip K. Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York: Doran Company, 1924), 62. Though the figure is unattributed, it is likely that Dr. Hitti derived this sum from the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration Report of 1920, which reported that 89,971 Syrians entered the United States legally between 1899 and 1919.

<sup>408</sup> There are numerous problems with using statistics to enumerate Syrians and Lebanese in the United States, however. American census data makes no distinction between Syria, Lebanon, and before 1918, Turkey as national origin; nor does it describe Lebanese religious distinctions. In addition, return migration or circular movements were

single religious group in the United States at the time.<sup>409</sup> Uncertain of the Maronite community's actual numerical weight and pressed for time by the French Consulate in New York, Archbishop al-Khuri's seems to have erred on the low side, revealing the extent to which his Maronite Church had yet to centralize its infrastructure in the American *mahjar*.

Submitting the Maronite census to the French, al-Khuri pressed the High Commissioner to recognize that in his opinion, the Maronites abroad made "more contact with Europe... establishing a moral rapport in the name of civilization" than any other Lebanese sect. He continued that in the *Grand Liban*, Lebanese Christians "fear the fanaticism of Islam" and that "France's supporters (among the Lebanese) come from villages and towns with a Christian majority."<sup>410</sup> As shepherd to his flock he wanted to ensure that the diaspora Maronites be included in the census, as (he concluded) they had the most to lose by surrendering a demographic majority in their own country. The French General Consul later reassured the archbishop that "with respect to this question that concerns you, I have just received specific reassurances regarding the legitimate apprehensions on the part of the Lebanese."<sup>411</sup> The French Mandatory government ultimately concluded that 42,637 Lebanese lived in the United States, 25,000 of whom were all Maronite and all lived (as Archbishop Shukrallah al-Khuri has written)

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very common, adding the potential for statistical inflation. al-Qundialchi, *al-'Arab fi-l-Mahjar*, 15-6. For complications owing to circular or return migration, see Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004): 67-78; Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Gender, Emigration, and the Middle Class in Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 20012), 112. For a reflection on the use of statistics in Lebanese migration history, see Kohei Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939: Towards a Study," *Lebanese in the World*.

<sup>409</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 2-3; George Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, 60-1.

<sup>410</sup> Draft of May 1, 1921 Letter from Shukralla al-Khuri to French Consul in New York, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection Folder 096, document 0165-6.

<sup>411</sup> 21 May 1921 Letter from French Embassy, Washington D.C. to Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0168.

in the northeast.<sup>412</sup> The heads of household al-Khuri counted were offered receipts which served as legal registration.<sup>413</sup>

*Producing the Right Ratio: Results of the 1921 Lebanese Census*

With population data from each of Lebanon's six municipal districts as well as the Lebanese diaspora, the French High Commissioner's office in Beirut set to amalgamating the data, a task completed in December 1921. That same month, the High Commissioner announced general elections for the 1922 Representative Council [conseil représentatif].<sup>414</sup> According to Arrêté 1307, its representatives would be elected by universal male suffrage, but a registration receipt from the 1921 census was required to be eligible to vote.<sup>415</sup> Those who had evaded the census were not eligible.<sup>416</sup> At the same time, representatives for each of Lebanon's six municipal districts as named on the census—Beirut, Tripoli Zgharta, Matn, Saida, and Biqa' -- would be nominated on the basis of each district's confessional balance. Each representative elected was to serve a constituency of 20,000, also defined in terms of their religion.<sup>417</sup> The Council's confessional ratios conformed to the findings of the 1921 census, findings that depended on the inclusion of Lebanese emigrants.

In determining the electoral ratio for the members of the Representative Council, the Mandatory government used the relative numbers of two groups: resident Lebanese, and tax-

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<sup>412</sup> M.A.E. *E-Levant, Syrie/Liban, 1918-1929*, 67-70 (22 June 1921), via Hashimoto, "Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939," 72.

<sup>413</sup> Arrêté 1307, article 26, "De l' électorat et de l' inéligibilité," reproduced in *Correspondance d'Orient* 287-288, 15-30 June 1922, 366; Sami Abdallah, *al-Jinsiyya al-Lubnaniyya Muqarana bi-l-Jinsiyya al-'Arabiyya al-Suriyya wa-l-Faransiyya* (Beirut: Maktabat Matabi' al-Suhuf al-Haditha, 1986), 29, via Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited," 225.

<sup>414</sup> Arrêté 1304, "Le conseil représentatif du Grand Liban," reproduced in *Correspondance d'Orient* 285-286, 15-20 May 1922, 283-4.

<sup>415</sup> Arrêté 1307, article 26, "De l' électorat et de l' inéligibilité," reproduced in *Correspondance d'Orient* 287-288, 15-30 June 1922, 366.

<sup>416</sup> Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Juillet 1922- Juillet 1923* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1924), 9.

<sup>417</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Juillet 1922- Juillet 1923*, 9-10.

paying emigrants.<sup>418</sup> These were grouped into “Christian” (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Protestant numbers) and “Muslim” (Sunni, Shi‘i, and Druze) groupings: 327,267 and 273,366 respectively, creating the ratio of 6:5. The exclusion of tax-paying emigrants, however, would have produced a different result: Christians comprised 51.9 percent of the resident population, and Muslims 48.08 percent. Even without taking the (largely Muslim) boycott of the 1921 census into account, the gap between “majority” and “minority” visibly closes when emigrant numbers are excluded. [see Appendix I for a copy of this census].

Although the inclusion of Lebanese emigrants appears not have upset the demographic outcomes of any single electoral district, it clearly ensured that Christian representatives safely outnumbered Muslim ones. Furthermore, with even representative districts of 20,000, the Representative Council’s Muslim constituencies were not only fewer but more broadly drawn.<sup>419</sup> Muslim representatives likely had greater difficulty in asserting an agenda and attracting the loyalty of their constituencies in a confessional system that was already difficult to navigate.

The same law which governed voting eligibility for resident Lebanese voters, Arrêté 1307, also included an article allowing tax-paying Lebanese emigrants to vote (article 28).<sup>420</sup> But despite the effort that the High Commissioner’s office and French Consulates across the Americas made to include emigrants in the Lebanese census, there was no subsequent effort to get out the emigrant vote. Emigrants who had successfully registered in 1921 could vote in

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<sup>418</sup> In addition to these two categories, a third emigrant category, “emigrants payant pas import,” of Lebanese emigrants who participated in the census but who had not paid taxes. Rania Maktabi asserts that perhaps the distinction was made because the French envisioned tax-paying emigrants and planning to return to Lebanon, while those in arrears may or may not do so. Whatever the logic, this third group of emigrants, totaling 81,243, was included on the census but not incorporated into the electoral ratio. “Population du Grand Liban,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 15-30 May 1922, 270; Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited”, 230.

<sup>419</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Juillet 1922- Juillet 1923*, 9-10.

<sup>420</sup> Arrêté 1307, article 28, “De l’ électorat et de l’ inéligibilité,” reproduced in *Correspondance d’Orient* 287-288, 15-30 June 1922, 366.



Lebanese elections as long as they returned to their reported villages of origin to cast a ballot.<sup>421</sup> But despite the appeals of Lebanese living abroad for some method of absentee balloting, the French Mandate never did make accommodations to this effect. Although it cannot be explained with undisputable certainty why the French did not seek Lebanese votes from abroad, the reason was certainly not a lack of consular authority. For as shall be seen, the Mandate government invested sizable resources into the creation of Syrian and Lebanese consulates in the Americas [see below]. The most likely explanation is that the French Mandate government saw the Lebanese diaspora as a convenient national constituency, to be counted for demographic purposes but not closely consulted in matters of Lebanese politics.

*Patriarchal Intelligence-Gathering: The Maronite Church's Uses of the 1921 Census*

As a high-profile census taker, Archbishop al-Khuri was placed at the center of Lebanon's most pressing political questions. Back home, Patriarch Huwayyik had entered Mandatory politics as France's representative for Lebanese Maronites, a constituency that the Church claimed spanned across both Lebanon and its diaspora. Laying claim to the voice and pulse of the Lebanese diaspora placed the Patriarch under enormous pressure to shore up the diaspora's actual political support, and a large part of archbishop al-Khuri's mission abroad was to oversee the Maronite Church's complete reorganization there.<sup>422</sup> al-Khuri's position as an intermediary between the mother Church and the diaspora's divided parishes was at least as important as his role as a census taker laboring under French contract. He worked in an ambiguous space between secular and clerical powers: between a Church laying claim to political preeminence, their French partners building a confessional republic, and a dizzying

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<sup>421</sup> However, the 1921 census did distinguish between "tax paying" and "non tax-paying" emigrants; the latter was ineligible for suffrage. This distinction arose from the High Commissioner's official assumption that tax-paying emigrants were sojourners likely to return to Lebanon; Hashimoto, *Lebanese Population Movement*, 79.

<sup>422</sup> George Labaki, *The Maronites in the United States*, 88-90.

array of political parties, activists, and rogue clerics each looking to advance their own agendas. Each aspect weighs into how the 1921 census was conducted.

As archbishop al-Khuri collected population data he also sought intelligence regarding Church structures in the diaspora, the activist networks that clerics had developed there, the Church's public image in each host society, and the degree to which each parish abroad adhered to Maronite doctrinal orthodoxies. This data, al-Khuri explained, would be critical in Patriarch Huwayyik's plan to reorganize and centralize the Maronite Church, placing the diaspora under direct control from Bkerke. During the War, the Patriarchate had only limited contact with the diaspora's parishes, and Maronite clergy living abroad dealt with their parishes in an *ad hoc*, autonomous, and decentralized fashion. In such a setting, accusations of corruption (both financial and liturgical) involving local clergy joined with a pervasive fear that Maronite believers would leave the Maronite fold for other Latin Catholic denominations convinced Patriarch Huwayyik that an audit of Maronite life abroad was due. Political exigencies comprised a major part of this audit, but in 1921, al-Khuri's tour was just as much about the Patriarchate extending its reach in the Lebanese diaspora as it was about reaching desirable demographic conclusions at home.

Although the archbishop's questionnaire does not appear in the Bkerke letters, the responses of many of the diaspora's highest priests are instructive of both the mother Church's aims and the agendas of local clergy. Archbishop al-Khuri's focus on both numbers of parishioners and questions about Maronite spiritual practices (*al-riyāḍāt al-rūḥiyya*), ritual adherence, and doctrinal conformity encouraged priests to demonstrate their own passion for Orthodoxy.<sup>423</sup> At one of New York City's oldest Maronite churches, Saint Jirjis, Father Jirjis

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423 Draft of Letter from Archbishop Shurallah al-Khuri to Patriarch Huwayyik, (s.d.), Bkerke Lettters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 001A7.

Ba'alani drafted a particularly thorough response letter describing the church's philanthropic societies, tight accounting of finances, and even covering questions of ritual: "there has not been and there shall be no relics of saints in this church."<sup>424</sup> Ba'alani then outlines a system of payments given to needy parishioners, and appeals to the archbishop for an extra priest for his growing congregation. Father Ba'alani's letter also shows evidence that his congregation understood al-Khuri's census to be about expanding the Maronite Church's authority abroad, and perhaps even dissented to it: along with the names of heads-of-household required, Ba'alani admits that "the parishioners (*ra'īyya*) of this diocese are of two minds regarding the census."<sup>425</sup> In New York, as elsewhere in the *mahjar*, the Maronite community remained politically divided over the issue of the Church's role in politics; just two years earlier, it had been the secular and anti-clerical political parties leading the vanguard of territorial Lebanese nationalism. Father Ba'alani's response letter demonstrates both his own desire to demonstrate conformity with the mother Church and an attendant image of a congregation more ambivalent about the Church's role as census taker.

Meanwhile, a letter from Mexico City reveals that some saw opportunity in the archbishop's audit. By 1921, sizable groups of Maronites worked in Mexico, particularly in Mexico City and Mérida, but perhaps because these communities were among the youngest in the diaspora, Mexico boasted few official Maronite institutions.<sup>426</sup> In August 1921 an itinerant priest in Mexico City submitted his response letter to archbishop al-Khuri. One of a network of clerics who followed Lebanese peddlers into the Latin American interior that comprised the

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<sup>424</sup> Father Jirjis Ba'alani, "Ajawaba 'ala As'ila Siyada al-Mutran Shukralla al-Khuri Ra'īs 'Asaqifa wa-l-Za'ir al-Batrirkī fi-l-Diyar al-Amrikiyya," (s.d.) Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0001D.

<sup>425</sup> Father Jirjis Ba'alani, "Ajawaba 'ala As'ila Siyada al-Mutran Shukralla al-Khuri Ra'īs 'Asaqifa wa-l-Za'ir al-Batrirkī fi-l-Diyar al-Amrikiyya," (s.d.) Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 0001D.

<sup>426</sup> Theresa Alfaro Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 65.

diaspora's frontier, the priest saw the audit as an opportunity to seek a Church for the local Lebanese community. Accompanying his plea for a Church and more direct communication with Bkerke were signatures of some two dozen of young merchants, nearly all of them involved in the textile trade.<sup>427</sup> The archbishop remitted this request directly to Patriarch Huwayyik, advising him that “although the clergy has been sufficient in ensuring the representation of Lebanese Maronites in the United States and Canada,” places south of the border lacked clerical infrastructure, complicating the census project but also raising the specter of a flock lost in the wilderness.<sup>428</sup>

The archbishop's concerns about the lack of Maronite infrastructure in the southern *mahjar* combined with fears that Maronites in Latin and South American countries might actually leave the Maronite fold.<sup>429</sup> Here, concerns about the spiritual practices (*al-riyāḍāt al-rūhiyya*) of Maronites in Latin countries combined with the political preeminence of secular and anti-clerical political parties operating there (among them, the *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* that had opposed the Church's participation in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference).<sup>430</sup> Patriarch Huwayyik and Maronite clergy around the diaspora alike expressed dismay at the prospect of “losing” Maronite believers to rival Churches, especially through the assimilation of Lebanese emigrants to their Catholic host societies.<sup>431</sup> Given that Lebanese Maronite emigrants comprised an important political and religious constituency, this prompted a discussion of how to best retain the emigrant faithful.

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<sup>427</sup> 21 August 1921 Letter to Patriarch Huwayyik via Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 001DF.

<sup>428</sup> Draft of Letter from Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri to Patriarch Huwayyik, (s.d.), Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 001A6-A7.

<sup>429</sup> Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico*, 65.

<sup>430</sup> Draft of Letter from Archbishop Shurallah al-Khuri to Patriarch Huwayyik, (s.d.), Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Document 001A7.

<sup>431</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, 294-8.

Back in Bkerke, Patriarch Huwayyik read the details of archbishop al-Khuri's audit and in August 1921 issued a proclamation to tackle these problems on three fronts. First, existing Church infrastructure would be centralized and placed under Bkerke's direct authority. Second, locales with notable Maronite communities would be provided with priests, missions, and Churches to ensure the continuation of the faith abroad. Finally, through these new missions, the Maronite Church would pursue a public relations project aimed at improving the image of Lebanese Maronites in the Americas. Huwayyik believed that through the provision of Maronite schools, charities, and social clubs, the faith's public profile could be enhanced, stymieing pressures that Maronite emigrants felt to assimilate into rival churches. Huwayyik's declaration finally authorized the establishment of new Maronite missions in Rio de Janiero, Mendoza, and Tucuman, giving them two projects: "to extend a helping hand to our sons in the *mahjar* for the purpose of returning glory to them, and to raise the name of our dear sect in the eyes of the Brazilians (etc) through the works of our honorable Lebanese sons."<sup>432</sup>

*Substantive Citizenry Abroad: Lay Maronite Political Infrastructure in the 1920s*

If the census of 1921 paved the way for both the Maronite Church and the Mandatory state to embrace Maronite emigrants as part of the national body, it also created new expectations within certain sectors of the Lebanese diaspora for an extension of rights and privileges as partners to the national project at home. Lebanese nationalist activists, some of them participants in both the establishment of the *Grand Liban* and the census project of 1921, used the new transnational infrastructure being built by the Maronite Church and the French Mandatory state to press claims for their own communities: the right to travel and trade in Lebanon, to obtain Lebanese nationality and citizenship, and to participate in the Maronite Church's reformation.

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<sup>432</sup> Ilyas Huwayyik's 14 August 1921 Proclamation, "al-Kanisa al-Maruniyya fi 'Asimat al-Barazil," reprinted in Lebanese press (s.p. clipping), Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 087, Document 0229.

Invoking the diaspora's cooperation with Mandatory authorities in the census of 1921, lay Maronite activists framed themselves as substantive, *de facto* citizens of the Lebanese entity. They defined their citizenship less often in the presence (or absence) of documentation but in their partnership with the Lebanese state, and the social contract they shared.

Both the Mandatory government and the Maronite Church responded to emigrant pressures for participatory political institutions by creating new forums for the discussion of emigrant political opinion. Patriarch Huwayyik, for example, facilitated the construction of a web of lay Maronite political societies. The largest of these organizations was the *Jam'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni*, established in New York by *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* president Na'um Mukarzil (the same man who accompanied Patriarch Huwayyik in 1919 as the diaspora's representative). Established jointly by Archbishop Shukralla al-Khuri (who remained in New York after the 1921 census), Archbishop Khayrallah Istafan, Father Francis Wakim, and an assortment of Lebanese nationalists organized by Na'um Mukarzil,<sup>433</sup> the *Ittihad Maruni* became a transnational lay organization with offices in New York and Buenos Aires that "aim(ed) to gather Maronite opinion in the diaspora in service to progress in matters of morality, patriotism, and social values."<sup>434</sup> The organization presented itself as a representative chamber (*dīwān*) linking Maronite emigrants to the mother Church, offering the Patriarch a pathway towards centralizing, unifying, and representing the diaspora's interests in Lebanon's politics. *Ittihad Maruni* secretary Alex Habib and president Na'um Hatem (Hatem was himself a journalist who wrote for Mukarzil's newspaper *al-Huda*) described the group as an opportunity for Maronite

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<sup>433</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, *Al-Qanun al-Asasi li-Jama'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni fi-l-Wilayat al-Mutahida* (New York: al-Matba'at al-Tijariyya al-Suriyya al-Amerikiyya fi-New York, 1921); 13-16; Patriarch Huwayyik Collection, Bkerke, Shukralla al-Khuri folder.

<sup>434</sup> 22 June 1920 letter from Na'um Mukarzil to Patriarch Huwayyik, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 096, Documents 0017-0018B.

Christian emigrants to assert themselves more directly as partners in building Lebanon's confessional democracy while also serving as a lay forum for Maronite political action.<sup>435</sup> The ubiquity of Maronite priests among the organization's trustees, however, underlines that this forum had its own internal hierarchy and was funded primarily by the Church. A lay organization, it was nonetheless not the place for criticism of the clergy or of Church politics.

The *Ittihad Maruni* played an important intermediary role as the Maronite Patriarchate exerted its authority in the diaspora, and the Church funded the club primarily as a means of reaching lay Maronites and secular activists and bringing them back into the fold.<sup>436</sup> The society's mandate "to serve the interests of the Maronite faithful (*al-ta'ifa*) in the *mahjar* and the homeland" empowered it to represent Lebanese Maronites in matters beyond Church business; in the early 1920s, for example, the *Ittihad Maruni* launched a transnational campaign to put pressure on the French Consulates of New York and Buenos Aires to liberalize regulations at Lebanon's ports, particularly in Jounieh, a growing entrepot closely linked to the Maronite emigrant business establishment.<sup>437</sup> Although the society had originally been established to allow the Church "to nourish any political trend that calls for progress in matters of the nation, its politics, and the preservation of its independence," it soon took on the characteristics of an informal diplomatic body or a chamber of commerce.<sup>438</sup> By invoking and nourishing its ties to a Maronite national constituency abroad, the Church also empowered that community to insert itself in the politics of the emerging Lebanese state as transnational citizens.

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<sup>435</sup> 13 March 1924 letter from the United Maronites Society (*Jam'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni*) to Patriarch Huwayyik, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 088, Document 0118.

<sup>436</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, *Al-Qanun al-Asasi li-Jama'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni fi-l-Wilayat al-Mutahida* (New York: al-Matba'at al-Tijariyya al-Suriyya al-Amerikiyya fi-New York, 1921); 13-16; Patriarch Huwayyik Collection, Bkerke, Shukralla al-Khuri folder.

<sup>437</sup> 26 November 1928 Letter from Butrus Kairouz and the *Ittihad Maruni* of Buenos Aires, Bkerke Letters, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 089, Document 0368.

<sup>438</sup> Mukarzil, *Al-Qanun al-Asasi li-Jama'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni fi-l-Wilayat al-Mutahida*, 4.

*French Mandatory Migration Policy and What it Says about the Mahjar*

France's decision to apportion the seats of Lebanon's first Representative Council according to the comparative weight of Lebanon's various sects presented an immediate systemic problem: having produced a ratio the High Commissioner's Office saw as favorable, this ratio could only be preserved by revising Lebanese population policies. The Mandate's determination to maintain a Christian majority flew in the face of decades of Lebanese emigration that, though temporarily stalled during World War I, quickly resumed at peak levels in the early 1920s.<sup>439</sup> Especially dense migration networks linked the Lebanese mountains to the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, both because these villages maintained older patterns of circular migration and because they were most decimated by famine and the resulting economic dislocations, leading to the persistence of emigration as an economic strategy. As French authorities took stock of the *Grand Liban's* complicated demographic situation, the High Commissioner's office expressed alarm at the continuing out-migration of Christians, and of Maronites in particular. The same logic that informed the decision to include the diaspora in the 1921 census also influenced the Mandate's early population policy: a desire to retain a transnational Maronite constituency abroad through informal diplomacy, and a countervailing desire to limit the mobility of Lebanese Maronites at home.

In 1924, the French High Commissioner's office in Beirut took a series of measures to slow the emigration of Arab Christians from Lebanese territory, including a new system of passports, standardized port controls, and consular work in the *mahjar's* ports of entry in the Americas. Shortly after the end of World War I, Lebanese emigration to the Americas quickly resumed, and for the first years of the mandate, French officials could do little to stop it. One complication lay in the absence of coherent nationality laws and passport controls: despite the

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<sup>439</sup> Albert Hourani, "Introduction," *Lebanese in the World*, 5-6.



census receipts that many Lebanese carried as proof of national belonging after 1921, there was no internationally agreed upon basis for Syrian or Lebanese nationality before the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which formally invalidated Turkish claims to the Empire's former Arab provinces. The following year, the French drafted Arrêté 2825, the first in a series of laws that would create a Lebanese nationality code. Executed in August 1924, Arrêté 2825 naturalized all Lebanese living in Lebanese territory and extinguished all claims upon Turkish citizenship. Lebanese emigrants were given two years to "opt" for Lebanese nationality (and apply for a Lebanese passport) or else seek naturalization in their domiciles abroad.<sup>440</sup> Notably, the law did not include provisions for dual citizenship; the goal was to encourage repatriation of Lebanese emigrants as well as to issue a standard set of Lebanese passports, thus facilitating the closer regulation of Lebanese travelers disembarking from Beirut.

Arrêté 2825 later formed the basis for Lebanon's Nationality law of 1925, which offered Lebanese citizenship to native residents of Lebanese territory, emigrants who had registered with the 1921 census, and any patrilineal descendent of a Lebanese citizen.<sup>441</sup> Whether because of the new nationality law or another reason, Lebanese emigrants began to repatriate to Lebanon in significant numbers in 1925; that year, France reported to the League of Nations that the numbers of returning emigrants had outstripped ongoing rates of emigration abroad.<sup>442</sup> By 1926, the charged atmosphere of the Great Syrian Revolt transformed the issue of the nationality "option" into a divisive political issue: anti-Mandate nationalists boycotted the nationality option

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<sup>440</sup> Optional nationality was a legacy of the Treaty of Versailles, which included provisions for former subjects of defeated Powers to opt for the nationality of either the new states in their ancestral (or ethnic) homeland, or seek naturalization in their places of exile.

<sup>441</sup> Regulation 15 did not allow for Lebanese women to pass their nationality on to children; the law has not yet been reformed and continues to generation issues for Lebanese women who marry non-Lebanese men; Rania Maktabi, "Lebanese Census of 1932," 25-6.

<sup>442</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 53.

while the French drafted aggressive new policy to ensure compliance with the Mandate's new nationality laws (even threatening some with statelessness, see Chapter 4).

Regularizing nationality laws and issuing new Lebanese passports was one major way that French authorities sought to discourage emigration and encourage repatriation, but High Commissioner Maxime Weygand also targeted passenger traffic coming through Lebanese ports with stiffer regulations and heightened visa controls. French efforts to constrain Lebanese emigration through its documentary regime were assisted by changing attitudes about immigration in the Americas. In 1924, the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in the United States introduced a strict annual quota that halted new legal entry of Syrians and Lebanese into that country.<sup>443</sup> U.S. immigration restriction did not stop Lebanese from seeking entry, however, and a clandestine network of traffickers emerged, smuggling would-be immigrants from Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and Brazil into the United States.<sup>444</sup> Accusations of smuggling and extortion of would-be Lebanese emigrants moving through Lebanese ports provided the French a sound pretext for cracking down on the passenger trade, prosecuting Beirut shipping companies involved with the trade, with mixed success.<sup>445</sup>

In addition to discouraging new emigration, the Mandate state also pursued emigrants into the diaspora. In 1924 new consular offices representing French Syria and Lebanon opened in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santos (Mexico), New York City, and Cairo, and staffed with local *dragomans* (the Ottoman term was used) from among the Mandate's *mahjari*

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<sup>443</sup> Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 79; Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *The Journal of American History* 86.1 (June 1999): 67-92.

<sup>444</sup> Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1925), 53. Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 111-2.

<sup>445</sup> Prosecution of shipping companies engaged in passenger traffic was a sticky task, primarily because these ships made several Mediterranean stops before crossing the Atlantic, creating problems of jurisdiction. M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 53-4.

partners.<sup>446</sup> These new consular offices were within the already operating French Consulates in the Americas, and typically the *dragomans* selected had been working informally with the French since World War I. The High Commissioner described the new consuls as an attempt at due diligence under the Mandate's Article 3, which described the government's responsibility for “maintaining and ensuring the rights and contacts (of emigrants) with their place of origin.”<sup>447</sup> The consular network cemented transnational Lebanese ties while delivering government access to emigrant enclaves. Where the 1921 census presented the Maronite Church with the intelligence needed to expand the Patriarchate's influence abroad, so too did it convince the French to cultivate political partners in the Lebanese diaspora.

Of course, the Mandate's transnational consular network did more than embrace Lebanese abroad: they also supervised and collected intelligence on them. The diaspora's *dragomans* sent regular reports on political goings-on in Lebanese emigrant communities. In New York, for example, Rashid Takieddine reported on plans made by Arab Nationalist leader ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar to tour to Americas fundraising and seeking signatures for petitions against the French Mandate.<sup>448</sup> In Buenos Aires, Shukri Abi Sa‘ab received the at times unpopular task of promoting French actions in Syria and Lebanon, a task that made for exhausting work during the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925 [see Chapter 4].<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> It should be noted, however, that diplomatic and consular interchange between the French Consulate of Buenos Aires and local Syrian and Lebanese activists began much earlier. Amin Arslan had been regular (albeit informal) conversation with the local French Consulate since at least 1915, and his connection with the French was part of why he was dismissed from his post as the Ottoman Empire's Consul General [see Chapter 4]. Similarly, the man named in 1924 as the Consul's premier dragoman, Shukri Abi Sa‘ab, had been working as a translator for the office since 1920; M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 54.

<sup>447</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 54.

<sup>448</sup> M.A.E., *E-Levant 1918-1940*, carton 408, Takieddine to Weygand, New York, 26 September 1924, 30.

<sup>449</sup> Emmanuel Taub, *Otredad, Orientalismo e Identidad: Nociones sobre la Construcción de un Otro Oriental en la Revista Caras y Caretas, 1898-1918* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Belgrano Press, 2008), 115.

Wary of the threat that emigration posed for the administrative system France was building in Lebanon, the Mandatory government went to lengths to service the diaspora and retain the fealty of Maronite emigrants. At the same time, it encouraged immigration of other Christian groups into Lebanon to balance to numbers. The Mandatory government's sensitivity to preserving a Christian majority in Lebanon led the High Commissioner's office to endorse the immigration of foreign Christians. After the Turkish War of Independence ended in 1923, for example, High Commissioner Weygand welcomed the arrival of Christian refugees from Anatolia. During the War, the Mandate had resettled fleeing Armenians, Assyrians, and Nestorians into Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut. Of these groups, the Armenians were the largest community resettled in Lebanon, assimilating into the existing Armenian communities of Beirut and elsewhere. These new immigrants also became eligible for Lebanese citizenship under Regulation 15 of the 1925 Lebanese Nationality Law.<sup>450</sup> Rania Maktabi notes with some irony that they were more easily naturalized than Lebanese Muslims who had evaded census-takers just four years before.<sup>451</sup>

For French authorities, the issues of Anatolian immigration and Arab emigration were inexorably linked,<sup>452</sup> but for the moment, "the question of Anatolian Christian expulsion from Turkey has taken an even greater significance than the continued emigration of Syrians and especially the Lebanese, who depart in large numbers for the Americas."<sup>453</sup> Of a wave of refugees 96,000 strong, 35,000 Armenians entered Lebanon, joining older Armenian communities already in Lebanon as the government hastened to provide hospitality and relief.<sup>454</sup> In an annual

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<sup>450</sup> Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 122.

<sup>451</sup> Maktabi, "Lebanese Census of 1932," 227.

<sup>452</sup> Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 49.

<sup>453</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 49-51.

<sup>454</sup> M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 50, 52.

report presented to the League of Nations, the French Foreign Ministry noted demographic pressures presented by the Armenians resettling in Lebanon, but concluded that “they will contribute a necessary artisan class to Syria and Lebanon, skilled in the trades, and by default they will compensate for the rarefaction of labor, itself a consequence of the traditional emigration of Lebanese to the Americas.”<sup>455</sup> In *Being Modern in the Middle East*, Keith Watenpaugh concludes that French efforts to resettle Armenian refugees in Syrian and Lebanese territory were driven by a desire to integrate them into a “respectable lower middle class” with a stake in partnership with the Mandate state.<sup>456</sup>

*Conclusion: The Expectations Gap in the Mandatory Mahjar*

The first Lebanese census of 1921 depended on a set of partnerships formed between the French Mandatory state and the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke. Though the French authorities and the Church worked together to cultivate and domesticate the diaspora for the purposes of state-building, the registration of Lebanese emigrants also encouraged the development of a transnational Lebanese substantive citizenry, raising the expectations of Lebanese abroad to be counted and consulted in the politics of the homeland. The early Mandate's population policies, themselves informed by the outcome of the 1921 census, demonstrate a desire to retain, maintain, and (if necessary) constrain Lebanese emigrants for the purposes of state-building in Lebanon. The census itself enumerated emigrants (particularly Maronites) as a means of retaining a demographic balance favorable for the confessional system of representation that France was building there. The emergence of a diasporic system of consulates for the Mandate illustrates the ways that France saw Lebanese emigrants as a national constituency, a population in partnership with the state. But at the same time, the French Mandate government made only

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455 M.A.E., *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 52.

<sup>456</sup> Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 288.

cursory moves to extend full powers of citizenship to its diasporic partners. Lebanese emigrants could vote, but only if they returned to Lebanon to do so; they could opt for Lebanese nationality, but only within a narrow time window and with French approval. On one hand, Lebanese emigrants were embraced and cultivated as a needed national constituency that was purported to protect Lebanon's national identity. On the other, the state placed new limits on mobility aimed at halting outward migration. On one hand, the census counted Lebanese emigrants; on the other, these same Lebanese emigrants were given incomplete access to suffrage. Between these two impulses – proclaiming the emigrants as unabashedly Lebanese while also questioning it – it is revealed how the Mandatory state saw the *mahjar*. The diaspora was a convenience, a useful national constituency whose transnational situation could be harnessed at the appropriate time and for political purposes.

The census of 1921 was, in the end, the beginning of a larger project by the French to “mandate the *mahjar*,” that is, to refract the Mandate’s authority beyond Syria and Lebanon and into the communities of Syrians and Lebanese abroad. The establishment of Mandatory consulates in the Americas was a significant move toward that ends, and through a diplomatic corps, the French had hoped to collect intelligence, influence nationalist politics, root out troublesome activists, and regulate the mobility, migration, and employment patterns of Syrians and Lebanese beyond the homeland. The Mandate’s consuls abroad, unsurprisingly, became by the mid-1920s a central focal point for the Arab nationalist movement, pushed out of Damascus in July 1920 but alive and well in Argentina. Chapter 4 examines the confrontations of Argentinian Arab nationalists, the French Mandate, and the League of Nations; the French Syrian-Lebanese consulate established there in the months following the census provided an important setting for this battle.

Appendix I: Lebanese Census of 1921<sup>457</sup>

## Population du Grand-Liban.

MUNICIPE OUCAZA	Maronites	Sunnites	Chiliotes	Grecs-Orth.	Druzes
BEYROUTH : Présents. " Emigrés payant impôt. " Total...	17,573 190 17,763	32,844 38 32,882	3,273 1 3,274	12,472 250 12,722	1,514 8 1,522
TRIPOLI : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	1,687 499 2,186	24,738 1,356 26,094	3 — 3	4,060 2,704 6,764	— — —
ZGHORTA : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	19,109 6,233 25,342	4,766 16,854 21,620	— — —	1,379 9,574 10,953	2 — —
AKKAR : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	1,422 19,373 20,795	1,585 1,585 3,170	404 — 404	1,366 3,518 4,884	7 — —
KOURA-BATROUN : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	3,654 52,719 56,373	103 23,574 23,677	47 451 500	3,518 28,932 32,450	— — —
METTEN : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	31,149 5,115 36,264	742 8,127 8,869	3,657 1,032 4,689	6,650 5,074 11,724	6,464 23 6,487
CHOUF : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	16,823 2,700 19,523	168 200 368	1,032 2,639 3,671	5,074 1,010 6,084	23 2,168 2,191
KESROUAN : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	34,305 4,441 38,746	200 24 224	2,639 61 2,700	1,010 250 1,260	— — —
DEIR EL-KAMAR : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	2,440 305 2,745	60 — 60	21 — 21	23 — 23	72 — 72
SAIDA : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	97,368 2,668 100,036	9,333 6,533 15,866	7,523 21,160 28,683	15,519 201 15,720	33,478 29 33,507
TYR : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	2,432 147 2,579	735 — 735	34,694 615 35,309	137 — 137	11 — 11
DJEZZINE : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	8,241 1,802 10,043	272 14 286	2,122 3,337 5,459	75 2,539 2,614	252 141 393
MERJAYOUN : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	1,111 511 1,622	3,342 133 3,475	82 — 82	465 — 465	— — —
HASBAYA : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	17,255 7,535 24,790	13,307 11,070 24,377	62,796 3,001 65,797	5,673 — 5,673	3,519 239 3,758
BEKAA : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	7,535 4,448 11,983	402 3,556 3,958	3,001 10,534 13,535	5,673 — 5,673	239 8 247
BAALBECK : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	3,018 134 3,152	3,556 79 3,635	10,534 17 10,551	5,673 — 5,673	8 — 8
RACHAYA : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	4,068 468 4,536	991 227 1,218	991 8,124 9,115	991 — 991	4,536 — 4,536
HERMEL : Présents. " Emigrés payant. " Total...	11,986 199,181 211,167	10,566 124,786 135,352	47 194,947 195,024	11,789 81,409 93,198	5,102 43,035 48,137
POPULATION TOTALE.	1,091,881	1,247,786	194,947	81,409	43,035

## Recensement de 1921.

Grecs-Cath.	Protestants	Divers	Total	Emigr. payant pas impôt	Etrangers	Total présent	Total des Emigrés	GENERAL TOTAL
4,225	535	4,906	77,292	2,406	14,206	91,498	2,034	91,498
31	19	1	58	2,406	14,206	91,498	2,034	91,498
4,256	544	4,997	77,920	2,406	14,206	91,498	2,034	91,498
171	148	704	31,512	421	838	32,350	5,062	32,350
15	37	60	4,641	421	838	32,350	5,062	32,350
186	185	704	36,153	421	838	32,350	5,062	32,350
—	—	76	25,413	9,160	5	25,418	11,451	25,418
—	—	293	2,291	9,160	5	25,418	11,451	25,418
435	293	740	34,732	6,935	10	34,732	10,239	34,732
455	293	740	34,732	6,935	10	34,732	10,239	34,732
472	5	19	34,729	12,597	15	34,739	19,919	34,739
—	—	844	107,791	28,692	15	94,889	41,609	130,498
992	298	298	51,709	4,022	336	52,045	13,235	52,045
2,561	187	298	8,313	4,022	408	60,184	15,472	60,184
496	25	98	59,781	8,227	2,368	41,004	14,290	41,004
4,351	713	42	36,243	9,474	113	3,085	580	3,085
208	36	128	4,816	2,241	3	9,359	2,740	9,359
26	3	1	2,072	2,241	3	9,359	2,740	9,359
342	14	1	2,072	2,241	3	9,359	2,740	9,359
10	1	1	569	22,877	3,220	156,318	43,677	199,995
8,801	1,207	569	173,798	22,877	3,220	156,318	43,677	199,995
1,199	64	379	32,254	1,848	180	32,434	2,804	32,434
1,111	1	5	936	1,848	180	32,434	2,804	32,434
3,063	99	40	41,214	5,347	80	41,294	6,254	41,294
121	325	9	15,824	2,622	50	15,893	5,440	15,893
4,320	354	9	2,818	2,622	50	15,893	5,440	15,893
64	543	198	11,028	2,241	110,008	110,008	20,353	130,361
1,015	253	1	9,359	2,241	510	110,008	20,353	130,361
279	253	16	115,945	14,106	510	110,008	20,353	130,361
11,242	1,434	629	39,674	8,621	1,129	40,803	11,176	40,803
10,766	328	570	39,674	8,621	1,129	40,803	11,176	40,803
4,638	22	22	31,777	2,583	351	32,128	3,044	32,128
200	157	122	12,800	1,481	134	12,942	2,966	12,942
350	10	9	8,795	16	47	8,842	63	8,842
25	—	—	47	16	—	8,842	63	8,842
17,015	547	723	97,505	12,741	1,661	94,213	17,549	111,762
42,402	4,215	8,436	609,069	81,241	20,250	579,778	130,784	710,562

<sup>457</sup> As reproduced by George Samné and Shukri Ghanim's newspaper, *Correspondence d'Orient*, in "Population du Grand Liban," *Correspondence d'Orient*, 15-30 May 1922, 270.

## CHAPTER 4: COLONIALISM, CONSTITUTIONALISM, AND THE CONSULATE: ARAB NATIONALISM IN ARGENTINA

*“All of the Syrians are loyal [to the Allied Powers], except for a few living in Mexico and Argentina.”*

- Na‘um Mukarzil, writing to the U.S. Bureau of Investigation, New York City, 18 April 1918<sup>458</sup>

On 10 November 1918, Amin Arslan sent a cable to United States President Woodrow Wilson from his office in Buenos Aires. Written four weeks after Ottoman troops evacuated greater Syrian territory and published in Syrian newspapers across the Americas (including Arslan’s own Spanish language title, *La Nota*), this appeal might have been like any other:

“Among the Syrian-Lebanese people in the *mahjar*, all have loudly proclaimed they want independence for Syria and Lebanon under the aegis of France [*sous l’égide de la France*] on the principles proclaimed by you: that all peoples, whether grand or small, have the right to choose his political fate... Sir, my parents are dead, my ancestral home has fallen to ruin. My political career is over. But my thoughts fly with no less emotion to the high mountains of Lebanon, and in the name of progress and prosperity, I sincerely proclaim that independence must come only under the aegis of France.”<sup>459</sup>

Arslan’s language was typical for the hundreds of public appeals circulating in the *mahjar* between 1918 and 1919, and it repeated (with small variations) appeals written by Shukri Ghanim, Na‘um Mukarzil, Nami Jafet, Ayyub Tabet, and other activists discussed thus far. But Arslan’s appeal stood apart from the others in one important respect; it is not every day that an Ottoman diplomatic official makes a public appeal in favor of a foreign occupying power. But these were not ordinary times, and from his residence on *Avenida de Corrientes*, the Emir Amin Arslan would turn coats not once but thrice between the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the

<sup>458</sup><sup>458</sup> NARA M1085, Investigative Reports of the Bureau of Investigation 1908-1922, Old German Files, 1909-21, case 197813, 1.

<sup>459</sup> Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, *E-Levant 1918-1940, Syrie-Liban* (henceforth MAE, SL), translated letter from Arslan to President Wilson, 10 November 1918. Antoine Hokayem, Daad Bou Malhab ‘Atallah, and Jean Charaf, *Documents diplomatiques Français relatifs à l’histoire du Liban et de la Syrie à l’époque du mandat, Vol. 1: Le Démantèlement de l’Empire Ottoman et les préludes du mandat* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2003), 403-406.



French Mandate. In 1908, Arslan was among the first Ottoman diplomats to support the Young Turk Revolution and was sent to Argentina to set up a new Consulate there.<sup>460</sup> In 1915, he openly opposed the Ottoman Empire's alliance with Germany and was unceremoniously dismissed from his post. During the War, he collaborated with the French to overthrow the Ottoman government, and he endorsed the concept of a "French protectorate" in Syria upon the armistice of 1918.<sup>461</sup> With French intentions shifting towards the separation of Mount Lebanon from a larger Syrian country during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Arslan moved swiftly to support Faysal's Hashimite monarchy emerging in Damascus and a treaty relationship with the United States of America to counter French influence in the region.<sup>462</sup> And in 1925, sickened by France's treatment of Druze insurrectionists in the Hawran, Amin Arslan would become one of the *mahjar*'s most militant anti-colonial intellectuals, supporting the Great Syrian Revolt and rejecting the more moderate nationalist politics of the Syrian National Bloc [*al-Kutla al-Wataniyya*] that emerged in 1928.

Amin Arslan's story and political trajectory from ardent Ottomanist to French collaborator, from collaborator to Hashimite Arab nationalist, Syrian revolutionary, and finally towards a world-conscious anticolonial pan-Arabism made him one of the *mahjar*'s most famous barometers of the Syrian anticolonial movement. Between 1915 and 1929, Arslan navigated

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<sup>460</sup> "The Papers of Mahmud Pasha," *London Times*, 28 August 1908, 5. According to the *London Times*, Arslan had been a long-time member of the "Young Turkey" Party (as early as 1895), despite beginning his consular work under the Sultan Abdul Hamid II. "Letters and Correspondence," *London Times*, 16 December 1895, 5.

<sup>461</sup> NARA M367. Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59. U.S. Consul to Buenos Aires Y. Stimson to U.S. Secretary of State, 4 November 1918, document 763.72119/3033, 2-3.

<sup>462</sup> As Maronite Patriarch Huwayyik headed to Paris to head the Second Lebanese Delegation to the 1919 Conférence de la Paix (a French creation, see Chapter 2), Amin Arslan joined a delegation of Lebanese Druze leaders to confer with the American Commission Mandates in Turkey (in Paris), reminding them that Syrians had overwhelmingly appealed for American, not French, assistance in reconstructing Syria. Arslan proposed accomplishing this through a treaty relationship with the Emir Faysal already in Damascus. NARAM367. Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59. American Commissioner Wallace and American Consul in Beirut Knabershue U.S. Secretary of State, 9 October 1919, document 763.72119/7232, 1-2.

through seemingly contradictory alliances linking diplomats in the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East. But the development and trajectory of Arslan's Arab nationalism—constitutionalist, anti-colonial, and increasingly radical—was far from peculiar. Rather, it was typical for Syrian Arab nationalists both at home and in the *mahjar* during the 1920s.

Eager to fill the political vacuum left by the Ottoman exodus from Syria and its diaspora, the administrators of the French Mandate declared the creation of *Grand Liban* and moved swiftly to conduct a transnational census of the Syrians and Lebanese living abroad in 1921 [see Chapter 3]. Finding an estimated 100,000 Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living in Argentina, the French Foreign Ministry announced the creation of a special Consulate dedicated to the Syrian and Lebanese Mandates in 1924, staffing it with a half dozen local immigrant personalities, including the long-time dragoman Shukri Abi Sa'ab. The Buenos Aires consulate was one among many established in the American *mahjar*, created in compliance with the League of Nations Mandate's Article 3, describing the government's responsibility for "maintaining and ensuring the rights and contacts (of emigrants) with their place of origin."<sup>463</sup>

Focusing on the Syrian and Lebanese office within the French Consulate in Buenos Aires, this chapter builds upon an argument in Chapter 3: specifically, that the administrators of the early French Mandate used consular affairs as a means of pursuing Syrian and Lebanese emigrants abroad, whether for purposes of regulating migration, gathering intelligence on emigre political activities, or to contain anti-French activism that (as shall be seen) progressively gained force in the *mahjar* during the 1920s. This chapter argues that the Consulate in Buenos Aires itself became a major site of political contest by 1925, and that dragomans, migration agents, collaborators, and consular officials (both current and former) became the leaders of a pan-Arab,

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<sup>463</sup> Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 54. See also Chapter 3.

anti-colonial nationalist movement in the Buenos Aires colony. Men like Amin Arslan, Jurj Sawaya, Jurj ‘Assaf, and others used their position in the Latin American *mahjar* to make an incisive set of critiques, not only of the French Mandate itself, but after 1925, of the League of Nations which supported it and by 1928, of the moderate nationalists of the Syrian National Bloc. All former French collaborators, these men, and their political party, *al-Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya* increasingly saw armed insurrection as the only means of liberating Syria, and pan-Arab unity as the only means of effectively countering the greater forces of imperialism. Before one can sketch the contours of an increasingly radical anticolonial Arab nationalism in Argentina, however, it must be asked: what led Ottoman subjects and diplomats like Arslan into collaboration with France? How did the consulate become a site of contest between nationalists and the state? And how did the consulate’s role in governing the *mahjar* change (or stay the same) during the 1920s French Mandate?

*Firing the Emir: The Closure of the Ottoman Empire’s Argentinian Consulate in 1915*

Founded in 1910 as a Committee of Union and Progress response to local demands for representation, the Ottoman Consulate in Buenos Aires represented an estimated quarter million Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living across South America (the New York Consul under Mundji Bey oversaw North America; see Chapter 1).<sup>464</sup> The Consul’s first (and only) Ottoman consul-general in Buenos Aires was Emir Amin Arslan, recently reassigned after spending a few years as Ottoman Consul to Belgium.<sup>465</sup> From a prominent Druze aristocratic family from Shwayfat,

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<sup>464</sup> It was, in reality, the second of two Ottoman Embassies in South America. The first was established in 1898 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. But what made the Buenos Aires Consulate distinct was its mission to serve and represent Ottoman subjects living abroad, argued Ottoman dragoman Alejandro Schamun in 1917. Schamun, *La Siria Nueva: Obra Histórica, Estadística y Comercial de la Colectividad Sirio-Otomana en las Repúblicas Argentina y Uruguay* (Buenos Aires: Empresa Assalam, 1917), 31.

<sup>465</sup> Arslan’s first administrative post in was Latakia; he filed for reassignment in Europe in the 1890s, a move he later attributed to his sympathies with the Ottoman constitutionalists exiled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. See Amin Arslan, *Mudhakkirat* (Buenos Aires: al-Matba‘a al-Tijariyya, 1934), 64-5; Ignacio Klich, “Argentine-Ottoman Relations and their Impact on Immigrants from the Middle East: a History of Unfulfilled Expectations,” *The Americas* 50, no. 2

Amin was cousin to both Shakib Arslan, who became a prominent leader in the Arab Nationalist movement following World War I, and Fu'ad Arslan, who would become a parliamentarian in Lebanon during the French Mandate.

Amin Arslan's appointment in Buenos Aires gave the estimated 100,000 Syrian and Lebanese emigrants in Argentina a formal diplomatic liaison to the Ottoman government, but his selection as General Consul was a strategic one.<sup>466</sup> In Belgium, Amin Arslan had established a reputation as a worldly public intellectual. His emphasis on mastering the local language and familiarizing himself with local political currents made him the darling of Belgium's progressive and Socialist parties, and once in Argentina, one of his duties was to enter into formal diplomatic relations with the Argentinian state.<sup>467</sup> Arslan focused his efforts on trade relations and on regulating Syrian migration; he envisioned Syrian labor immigration to Argentina as mutually economic benefit that could underwrite a deeper political alliance.<sup>468</sup> Meanwhile, Arslan held regular visits with officials representing other European states, and was particularly close to the city's French Consulate.<sup>469</sup> In 1910,



Figure 7: Emir Amin Arslan shortly before his 1915 dismissal. Source: *La Critica*, 13 April 1915, 1.

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(1993), 178-80.

<sup>466</sup> Citing a February 1921 letter from the French Foreign Ministry, Gildas Brégain concludes that by that date the Syrian community in Argentina numbered around 110,000; Gildas Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amérique du Sud, 1918-1945* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2008), 59.

<sup>467</sup> 'Aja Nuwayhid and Khaldun Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan: Nashir Thiqafiyya al-'Arab fi al-Arjantin* (Beirut: Dar al-Istiqlal li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2010), 89-94.

<sup>468</sup> Stephen Hyland, "'Arise from Deep Slumber:' Transnational Politics and Competing Nationalisms among Syrian Immigrants in Argentina, 1900-1922," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no. 3 (2011), 566.

<sup>469</sup> Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan*, 28-9.

maintaining varied official contacts earned Arslan an esteemed diplomatic career. By 1914, however, such connections made Arslan and his office the object of mounting official suspicion.

The trouble began shortly after news broke that the Ottoman government entered World War I on Germany's side in October 1914. Within weeks, the French Consul in Buenos Aires approached Amin Arslan seeking reassurances that his office was opposed to the Ottoman Empire's entry into War, and indeed, a great many Syrians and Lebanese in the city similarly petitioned against the effort.<sup>470</sup> Arslan was quick to proclaim his opposition to the Empire's alliance with Germany, and in Spring 1915, he went rogue entirely: from his post in Buenos Aires, Arslan made speeches in favor of the Entente and insisted that the Ottoman Empire's entry into the War was contrary to "the interests of the [Syrian] community, who are now in the hands of foreigners [Germans]."<sup>471</sup> Arslan's support for the Allied Powers prompted the city's German Consul to complain to his employers in Istanbul, and in April 1915, the German Consulate wrote Arslan, threatening to have him fired if he did not honor his government's alliance with the Central Powers. The Syrian colony's response was fierce and immediate: on 12 April 1915, several thousand local Syrian and Lebanese immigrants descended upon the Ottoman Consulate in Buenos Aires to demonstrate against the War and show support for their embattled Consul.<sup>472</sup> Arslan met them on the Consulate's steps, and read aloud a letter he had penned to Germans,

"Señor Consul General [of Germany], I have the pleasure of acknowledging your letter... I think it goes without saying how surprising this letter was, as its contents conflict with all established diplomatic protocol, and it has not come to my earnest attention that my Ottoman Empire forms a mere part of your German Imperium. And I keep hope, nevertheless, for the honor and dignity of my poor country, dragged unwillingly into the abyss of this war by you, a savage foreign power."<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan*, 73.

<sup>471</sup> "La Guerra: El Consulado General de Turquía Actitud del Emir Arslan," *La Prensa* 5 June 1915, 6.

<sup>472</sup> "A Conflagração: Outras Informações: Na Argentina," *Estado de São Paulo* 14 April 1915, 1.

<sup>473</sup> "Una Tropolía Germania en la Argentina: un Insolente 'Ultimatum' al Cónsul Turquía, Digna Actitud de Emir Emin Arslan, La Colectividad Otoman se Opone Decisamente," *Crítica* 13 April 1915, 1.

Arslan ended his speech by proclaiming his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, “to my august sovereign, the Sultan... and my only superior, the Grand Vizier.” If he was to be terminated, it would not be by the Germans; Arslan challenged Istanbul to terminate him if they were not ready to repudiate their German alliance.<sup>474</sup>

And terminate him they did. On 19 May 1915, an official letter signed by Grand Vizier Talat Pasha arrived, relieving Amin Arslan of his post and proclaiming the immediate closure of the Ottoman Consulate in Buenos Aires. The letter instructed Arslan immediately return to Istanbul and to deliver the Consul’s records, including any documents relating to Ottoman subjects living in Argentina, to the city’s German Consulate.<sup>475</sup> Arslan refused to comply and saw this course of events as further evidence that the Ottoman government had become a mere German puppet. In an interview with *La Prensa* newspaper, he explained that “many [of these documents] provide legal protection and justice [for Syrian immigrants] in this country. No foreigner has the right to take and oversee the files of Ottomans [living in Argentina], nor to determine the interests of my countrymen, who are no less than 100,000 and have an interest in defending what is rightfully theirs.”<sup>476</sup> Arslan resolved that he would keep the Consulate shuttered, but if the Germans came for Ottoman records, he would appeal to Argentina’s Supreme Court for their protection. In return, the Ottoman government convicted him of treason in absentia, and condemned him to death.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> “A Conflagração: Outras Informações: Na Argentina,” Estado de São Paulo 14 April 1915, 1.

<sup>475</sup> “La Guerra: El Consulado General de Turquía Actitud del Emir Arslan,” La Prensa 5 June 1915, 6.

<sup>476</sup> “La Guerra: El Consulado General de Turquía Actitud del Emir Arslan,” La Prensa 5 June 1915, 6.

<sup>477</sup> ‘Ajaj and Khaldun Nuwayhid describe Arslan’s relationship with the CUP government as strained well before the beginning of World War I. According to their biography, Ottoman Consul General Ruhi bey Khalidi (posted in Istanbul) posted his friend, Amin Arslan, to Argentina precisely because of his passion for reformist politics (passions al-Khalidi shared, but was safer to voice because of his political standing in the Sublime Porte). Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid frame Amin Arslan’s falling out with the Empire after 1914 as the final straw between the diplomat and his employers after his political protector, Ruhi bey Khalidi, passed away in late 1913. Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan*, 67, 74-5.

Both Argentinian and Brazilian newspapers reporting on the fracas were quick to call the German Consulate's proposed takeover of Ottoman Consular affairs an "act of piracy"<sup>478</sup> and also to "congratulate the Consul of the Turkish colony [*colonia turca*] for so energetically opposing the pretensions of a foreign monarchic regime."<sup>479</sup> But what they were less likely aware of was the extent to which Arslan's office had collected intelligence on Syrian political activities in South America. Arslan likely hesitated to turn over his records not only because doing so would amount to submitting his community to foreign administration, but also because the documents could lead to criminal prosecution. It bears noting that at this same moment, in mid-1915, Cemal Pasha's troops broke into the abandoned French Consulate in Beirut, leading to dozens of treason charges for those named in documents found there. The martyrs of May 1916 [see Chapter 2] were among those named.<sup>480</sup>

Similarly, the Ottoman Consulate building housed one of the colony's most advanced Arabic-language printing press, a Mergenthaler machine produced in the United States [see Chapter 2]. The Ottoman government's demand that Arslan submit the press to the Germans was an attempt at *de facto* censorship.<sup>481</sup> Not happy to have his wings clipped, Arslan responded by founding a Spanish language newspaper called *La Nota*, bringing together Syrian, Argentinian, and other Latin American voices together in critique of the Central Powers for the War's duration.<sup>482</sup> Arslan was also among the activists who after 1916 recruited young Syrian, Lebanese, and Armenian immigrants in South America for the *Légion d'Orient*, despite the fact

<sup>478</sup> "Los Piratas Operando en la Argentina: Alemania se Adueña del Consulado Turco," *Crítica* 20 May 1915, 1.

<sup>479</sup> "A Conflagração: Outras Informações: Na Argentina," *Estado de São Paulo* 14 April 1915, 1.

<sup>480</sup> Cemal Pasha, *La vérité sur la question syrienne* (Istanbul: Imprimerie Tanine, 1916).

<sup>481</sup> "Los Piratas Operando en la Argentina: Alemania se Adueña del Consulado Turco," *Crítica* 20 May 1915, 1.

<sup>482</sup> *La Vanguardia* announces the first issue of Arslan's newspaper on 14 July 1915; "Periodismo," *La Vanguardia* 15 July 1915, 5. *La Nota* ran from 1915 through 1921, although Arslan passed ownership of the title on to Carlos Alberto Leumann; *Vran* from 1915 through 1921, although Arslan passed ownership of the title on to Carlos Alberto Leumann; Verónica Delgado, "Reconfiguraciones de Debates y Posiciones del Campo Literario Argentino en el Seminario *La Nota*, 1915-1920," *Anciages* VIII (Universidad de la Plata, 2004), 81-99.

that his political leanings were in greater sympathy to Emir Faysal's Arab Revolt than to the Francophile pan-Syrian views of his Parisian partner, Shukri Ghanim.<sup>483</sup> Arslan's support for French actions in the Mashriq was both pragmatic and complicated. On one hand, Arslan collaborated with Ghanim's *Comité Central Syrien* and the French Consulate in Buenos Aires to recruit local Syrians for the French military. And as Arab troops closed in on Damascus and France declared victory in early October 1918, Arslan had publicly endorsed French intervention in Syria, calling it "the beginning of a new period of prosperity, progress, and unity [that] will open if Syria enters into French protection [*bajo de égida de Francia*]."<sup>484</sup> On the other hand, however, Arslan saw complete independence for Syria as his primary political goal, and his support for French actions in his home country was contingent on Arslan's belief that they would be nation builders, not colonizers. As the Paris Peace Conference opened in January 1919, for instance, Arslan wrote French Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon that French assistance was obligatory for reasons of civilization: "unfortunately, Syria does not have the means to become a modern nation by itself as [it has] just come out of the darkness of the Ottoman occupation."<sup>485</sup> Therein lay the root of Arslan's (and Syrian Argentinian) early support for the French Mandate: his belief that the French would help develop a Syrian civil society, eradicate sectarian politics, and build modern political institutions in preparation for self-rule. France's February 1919 endorsement of the First Lebanese Delegation and subsequent promotion of Lebanon's

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<sup>483</sup> Indeed, Arslan's willingness to collaborate with Shukri Ghanim's recruitment campaign and with (by extension) the French Foreign Ministry made him the target of Dr. Khalil Sa'adih's ire. According to Maria Narbona, both men belonged to *al-Ittihad al-Suri*, an organization founded by Sa'adih in Buenos Aires in 1915. By 1918, Sa'adih had quit the organization (whose members were largely in favor of the *Légion d'Orient* project. Maria Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Ideologies in French Syria and Lebanon* (Doctoral Dissertation: University of California Santa Barbara, 2007), 100. On Arslan's involvement in the *Légion d'Orient* recruitment campaign, see Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amérique du Sud*, 144.

<sup>484</sup> "Comunicaciones Oficiales de la Legación de Francia," *La Nación*, 10 October 1918, 10.

<sup>485</sup> Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, Buenos Aires (hereafter AD-BA), carton 102, Union Siria, 1, 1/2/1919, via Maria Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Ideologies*, 101.



separation from Syria appeared, to Arslan, to contradict these aims. The King Crane Commission's summer 1919 findings further suggested that Arslan was not the only one who felt this way; according to this report, most Syrians desired complete independence and territorial unity.<sup>486</sup>

In a dramatic reversal of his previous opinion regarding partnership with France, Arslan drafted a public letter of appeal to the League of Nations and the United States government in October 1919, arguing that:

“In conformity with Article 27 of the Covenant of the League of nations, we have demanded the complete independence of our Syrian nation with respect to the maintenance of its political unity and the granting of the mandate to one of the two Anglo-Saxon nations and to no other; begging the allies and friends, champions of the oppressed peoples... [we are] fully convinced that only the Anglo-Saxon nations are able to uplift and promote the welfare of our country without seeking colonial advantages.”<sup>487</sup>

Despite Arslan's appeals, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference concluded with the April 1920 San Remo Agreement, in which the League of Nations awarded the Mandate over Syria (including Lebanon) to France. Within a year, French troops deposed Faysal in Damascus, created a *Grand Liban* distinct from Syria, and initiated a Lebanese census that would ensure French clients the lion's share of political power in the new country. Ussama Makdisi concludes of this period, “a new colonial age had dawned.”<sup>488</sup>

From Buenos Aires, former French collaborator Amin Arslan came to Hasmimite Arab nationalism somewhat belatedly, primarily a function of his opposition to the creation of a “tiny Lebanese republic” [republiqueta libanesa], which he argued would be terminally incapable of

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<sup>486</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 142.

<sup>487</sup> NARAM367. Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, Group 59. American Consul in Beirut Knabershue to U.S. Secretary of State, 9 October 1919, document 763.72119/7232, 3-4.

<sup>488</sup> Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 146.

autonomous self-government.<sup>489</sup> Between the establishment of the Mandate in 1920 and the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925, politics in the Syrian diaspora would be defined by a struggle for political legitimacy between the France (who had the state) and the Syrian-Arab nationalist movement led by Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar and Shakib Arslan, who argued that Syrians wanted the fulfillment of the recommendations made by the King-Crane Commission of 1919: complete independence, a unified, federated, and constitutional Syrian state including Lebanon and Palestine, and the repudiation of European support for Zionist settlement in Palestine.

As French officials hastened to secure the machinery of the Mandatory state, investing Syrian and Lebanese living at home and abroad in their regime through the census, issuance of passports, and nationality laws, Arab nationalists living in Argentina and beyond targeted their political appeals directly at the League of Nations, the emigrant public, as well as at Argentinian diplomats and policymakers. Their anticolonial strategy was aptly summed in 1922 by former American commissioner Charles Crane himself: “Demand your independence in a modern and civilized manner, and you will achieve it with your Arab heads held high.”<sup>490</sup> Until 1925, the formation of the Syrian Palestinian Congress and the issuance of petitions to the League of Nations constituted the movement’s “modern and civilized” means of suing for independence.

*The French Mandate and the Syrians of Buenos Aires before the Revolt, 1920-1925*

Among the three Syrian and Lebanese “colonies” under consideration here, the Buenos Aires community presented the most difficulty for the French as they sought to institutionalize their Syrian Mandate. During World War I, the Argentinian chapter of the Lebanese independence party *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* broke ranks with its sister chapters to protest against the recruitment of Syrian emigrants in the *Légion d’Orient*. The *Légion* issue itself

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<sup>489</sup> Emin Arslan. “La Repùbliqueta del Líbano,” *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés* (Buenos Aires: Imp. Radio Corrientes, 1926) 118.

<sup>490</sup> Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 155.

caused a riot outside a Rosario Church in 1916, raising the eyebrows of the Argentinian government (then neutral in the war) and forcing French consul Paul Claudel to focus his efforts on Syrians in Brazil rather than Argentina.<sup>491</sup> In 1919, Khalil Sa'adih held his Syrian General Congress in Buenos Aires, a meeting of Syrian and Arab nationalists that demanded immediate independence and repudiated any French claims to Syria or Lebanon in the postwar settlements at the Paris Peace Conference [see Chapter 2]. When France defeated Emir Faysal and instituted the Mandate by force of arms in 1920, presenting the Mandate as a liberal exercise in nation-building proved to be a hard sell to the Syrians living in Argentina, who more than other *mahjari* communities opposed French intervention from the start.<sup>492</sup>

Between 1920 and 1922, French authorities nevertheless took measures to extend the Mandate's administrative reach into the southern *mahjar*, particularly in Argentina. In 1920, the French consulate in Buenos Aires employed local Syrian and Lebanese dragomans, making the first formal diplomatic connection with the emigrant community (during the war, France's foreign consuls worked through such Syrian emigrant intermediaries but did so informally). After the census of 1921 (which estimated that Argentina's Syrian and Lebanese community was at that point 110,000 strong),<sup>493</sup> the French High Commissioner's Office in Beirut announced the establishment of a Mandatory consular network in South America, centered on the Buenos Aires consulate.<sup>494</sup> The Mandate's Buenos Aires consulate was empowered with the right to issue passports, travel papers, and certificates of Mandatory nationality under articles 34 and 36 of the

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<sup>491</sup> See Chapter 2; also Simon Jackson, "Auxiliary Troops, Global Recruitment: the Légion d'Orient and the Origins of the French Mandate in Syria, 1915-1922," in Ludivine Broch and Alison Carrol, eds., *France in an Era of Global War 1914-1945: Occupation, Politics, and Empire* (London: Palgrave, 2014), (page numbers forthcoming).

<sup>492</sup> The Argentinian *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* of Argentina, for instance, had opposed the French-led *Légion d'Orient* recruitment even as its cognate parties across the Americas participated. So divisive was the issue of French involvement in the Mashriq that the Argentinian chapter of the party split during the War, into *al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* (anti-French Mandate) and *al-Tahalluf al-Lubnani* (pro-French Mandate). See Chapter 2.

<sup>493</sup> Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amérique du Sud*, 59.

<sup>494</sup> MAE, *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, Année 1924*, 54.

Treaty of Lausanne, which provided a means for former Ottoman subjects to “opt” for Syrian or Lebanese nationality through the French Consulate.<sup>495</sup> Because most of them had arrived in Argentina with Ottoman passports, Syrian and Lebanese emigrants found themselves in an uneasy legal predicament: they could either opt for Syrian or Lebanese nationality under the French Mandate, seek naturalization in Argentina, or their Ottoman nationality would automatically transfer to a Turkish one after the grace period set out by Lausanne lapsed. For the Mandatory government, already concerned with retaining Syrian and especially Lebanese emigrants for demographic reasons, the preferable choice was clear. For the first years of its existence, then, the Mandate’s Buenos Aires consulate was primarily tasked with encouraging Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to opt for French Mandatory citizenship,<sup>496</sup> a project that ran immediately against the Arab nationalist, anticolonial political currents of the Buenos Aires Syrian community (and which, as a result, largely failed).

Although in 1919, the General Syrian Congress organized by Dr. Khalil Sa‘adih was ultimately unsuccessful in convincing the League of Nations to back a federated Syrian nationalism, this meeting of South America’s most prominent pan-Syrian and Hashimite Arab nationalists had one significant and lasting impact: it created new alliances between activists that later influenced the Arab nationalist movement. Dr. Sa‘adih left Buenos Aires and moved to São Paulo in early 1920 after being appointed to the presidency of *al-Hizb al-Watani al-Hurr*, a Syrian nationalist political party that had been operating there under As‘ad Bishara and Najib Trad (in various iterations) since 1914.<sup>497</sup> But in Buenos Aires, Sa‘adih left behind a vibrant Arab

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<sup>495</sup> “Optional nationality” as guaranteed by the Treaty of Lausanne remained a legally ambiguous and often informal process until the French began drafting formal Nationality laws in 1925, however. The French consulate in Buenos Aires compelled Syrian and Lebanese subjects seeking visas to travel to take the nationality “option,” but on the whole, few emigrants living in Argentina sought out a change in nationality.

<sup>496</sup> Elian Fersan, *L’Émigration Libanaise aux États-Unis: d’Après les Archives du Ministère de Affaires Étrangères de France* (Ph.D. Thesis, Université Saint-Espirit de Kaslik, 2006), 116.

<sup>497</sup> The party’s official newspaper before 1920 was *al-Watan al-Hurr*. After Dr. Sa‘adih’s arrival with his son, Antun,

nationalist activist scene led predominantly by Dr. Jurj Sawaya and Felipe Homad, who both attended Sa‘adih’s General Syrian Congress of 1919 and who strove to support an Arab nationalist future for Syria, under Emir Faysal until 1920 and through organized transnational activism with the Syrian Palestinian Congress soon after.<sup>498</sup>

While Khalil Sa‘adih left for Brazil, another prominent Arab nationalist personality, Dr. Jurj Sawaya, had recently arrived in Buenos Aires from Boston, where he and his brother Najib wrote occasionally for *al-Fatat* newspaper and its Boston sister title, *Fatat Boston*.<sup>499</sup> Both papers supported Emir Faysal’s Arab Revolt and his political party, *al-Fatat*.<sup>500</sup> Shortly after coming to Argentina, Jurj Sawaya established another Arab nationalist party, *al-Hizb al-Watani al-‘Arabi*, which boasted a multi-confessional membership (predominantly Sunni Muslim and Greek Orthodox, according to Maria Narbona) and which advocated for an alliance between Faysal’s Syrian state and the United States of America.<sup>501</sup>

Sawaya attended Sa‘adih’s Syrian General Congress in February 1919, where he attempted to broker a demand from the Congress for a treaty of alliance between Emir Faysal and American president Woodrow Wilson.<sup>502</sup> In his search for American allies, Sawaya was inclusive; in March 1920, for instance, he reportedly visited Argentinian Foreign Minister

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they founded *al-Jarida*, which became the party’s official title. *Al-Hizb al-Watani al-Hurr*, also called *al-Hizb al-Watani al-Suri*, was the South American predecessor for *al-Hizb al-Qawmi al-Ijtima‘i al-Suri* (Syrian Social Nationalist Party), founded in 1932 by Antun Sa‘adih; Ali Hamiya, *al-Duktur Khalil Sa‘adih*, 114-5.

<sup>498</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahab Akmir, *al-‘Arab fi-l-Arjintin: al-Nushu’ wa-l-Tatawwur* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-‘Arabiyya, 2000), 134-5.

<sup>499</sup> *Fatat Boston* was owned and edited by Wadi ‘Shakir, husband of Syrian Lebanese Ladies Aid founder Hannah Sabbagh, see Chapter 6.

<sup>500</sup> By 1918, both brothers had moved to South America; Jurj to Argentina, and brother Najib to Brazil. Najib Sawaya/Nagib Savoia, *Riwaya Safinat al-Wataniyya* (São Paulo: Matba‘at al-Funun, 1946), preface. Jurj Sawaya was also related to Tannus Sawaya, co-founder of the Syrian Lebanese Bank in Argentina; “al-Bank al-Suri al-Lubnani,” *al-Islah* 14 August 1928, 4.

<sup>501</sup> Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona, “La Actividad Política Transnacional de las Comunidades Árabes en el *mahyar* Argentino: el Caso de Jorge Sawaya,” *Contributions Arabes a las Identidades Iberoamericanas* (Madrid: Rotosa, 2008), 217-8.

<sup>502</sup> Akmir, *al-‘Arab fi-l-Arjintin*, 136.

Honorio Pueyrredón, asking for his government's formal recognition of Syria's Hashimite Arab nationalist government under Emir Faysal. Pueyrredón welcomed Sawaya in 1920, and although the Argentinian Foreign Ministry did not recognize Faysal's government (which was deposed shortly thereafter), this meeting inaugurated several years during which Jurj Sawaya was seen as an informal representative for the city's Syrians and Lebanese. In 1926, Sawaya would even be appointed Argentina's Consul to Beirut, a post which Sawaya had to decline after just a few weeks amidst a firestorm of protest from the French Foreign Ministry.<sup>503</sup> Sawaya was a man, in other words, who operated within several national contexts at once, often through informal networks, and with varying degrees of political capital in each. It is little wonder why the French Consul in Buenos Aires had him under periodic surveillance.

Jurj Sawaya met Ta'au "Felipe" Homad at the Syrian Congress in Buenos Aires in 1919.<sup>504</sup> During the war, Homad worked as a merchant trading through the port at Buenos Aires.<sup>505</sup> That year the two would found al-Hizb al-Watani al-Suri, distinct from Khalil Sa'adih's own party, al-Hizb al-Dimuqrati al-Watani, in that Sawaya and Homad endorsed an alliance with the United States of America. In 1921, Homad travelled to Geneva to attend the Syrian Palestinian Congress in Geneva as representative for the Arab nationalists of Argentina. The Syrian Palestinian Congress of June 1921 was a meeting of all the exiled leaders of Emir Faysal's former kingdom. Led by Michel Lutfallah, Rashid Rida, Shakib Arslan, and 'Abd al-

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<sup>503</sup> Narbona, "La Actividad Política Transnacional," 221.

<sup>504</sup> He went by Felipe Homad, but in Arabic his name was Ta'au 'Imad.

<sup>505</sup> Suspecting him of smuggling contraband into (or out of) Syria, the U.S. War Trade Board requested an investigation into his possible "trade with the enemy" in mid-1918. Homad remained under the U.S. embassy's observation until the War's end; NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, 5 June 1918 telegram to U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires; 763.72112a/1347 page 1. The outcome of the investigation is not included in these documents, but on 23 August 1918, Homad's name was added to Great Britain's blacklist under the "Trading with the Enemy Proclamation," a statute that forbid any British citizens or subjects to engage in commerce with the few hundred merchants named. NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, copy of 23 August Proclamation; 763.72112/10255 page 2.

Rahman Shahbandar, the Syrian Palestinian Congress seeded an organizations by the same name with the express goal of using the terms of the League of Nations Mandates to counter French occupation of Syria.<sup>506</sup> Although the American Charles Crane would not tell Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar to “demand your independence in a modern and civilized manner” until 1922, this was precisely the Syrian Palestinian Congress’s tack. The organization worked primarily through intense petitioning campaigns aimed at the League of Nations, public appeals through the press, and committee-style activism, a pattern which mirrored the Syrian Congresses of 1913 (Paris), 1919 (Buenos Aires), and 1920 (Damascus), among others. This was a pattern of politics, in other words, that was nearly a decade old already.<sup>507</sup>

The 1921 Geneva Congress drafted a set of demands made to the League of Nations on behalf of Syrians, Palestinians, and Arabs under the French and British Mandates: they protested against the usurpation of Syrian and Palestinian lands against the express wishes of their inhabitants (according to the King-Crane Commission of 1919), against the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that declared Britain’s support for a “Jewish national home” in Palestine, and against the principle of “class B mandates” laid out by Article 22 of the League of Nations Charter.<sup>508</sup> The Geneva Congress couched its resolutions in terms of both self-determination and human rights, aspects which marked anti-Mandate activism for the following decade. As the delegates in Geneva returned to Paris, Cairo, and Beirut, Felipe Homad returned to Buenos Aires and once there, rejoined Jurj Sawaya as well as the community’s most influential men: Alajandro Schamún (Assalam newspaper), Ilyas ‘Amar and Constantine Melhem,<sup>509</sup> Musa and Solomon Busader,

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<sup>506</sup> Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 222.

<sup>507</sup> See Chapter 2; also Andrew Arsan, “‘This is the Age of Associations’: Committees, Petitions, and the Roots of Interwar Middle Eastern Internationalism,” *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 2 (2012); 181.

<sup>508</sup> Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d’Amérique du Sud*, 152-3.

<sup>509</sup> A 1922 French diplomatic document linked ‘Amar and Melhem to Solomon Cana’an, “Faysal’s former deputy now banned from Syria.” See Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d’Amérique du Sud*, 151.

Musa 'Azizi (future director of the Patronato Sirio-Libanése), and Jurj 'Assaf. The group formed *al-Jam'iyya al-Suriyya al-Lubnaniyya* in 1922, an organization allied with Dr. Shahbandar's People's Party. The party itself would not last, but in 1925, two of its number, Jurj Sawaya and Jurj 'Assaf, would join former Ottoman consul Amin Arslan in supporting the Great Syrian Revolt against the French.

*The Great Syrian Revolt and Arab Nationalism in Buenos Aires, 1925-1927*

In July 1925, a band of irregular fighters organized under Druze emir Sultan al-Atrash attacked French troops in Salkhad, a small outpost in Suwayda. What looked for a moment like another small skirmish in the Jabal Druze, a part of southern Syria that remained only partially pacified by the French in the wake of Syria's occupation in 1920 soon ignited into a local revolt against Mandatory misadministration, rampant inflation, and rising grain costs.<sup>510</sup> Guided by a colonizer's perspective that the Druze revolutionaries acted not out of economic grievances but out of a feudal (or tribal) obligations, French troops took a hard line against the uprising, creating mass dissent not only in the Hawran but even in Syria's largest cities: Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus. Michael Provence argues that what transformed the Great Syrian Revolt from a local insurrection into a nation-wide general uprising was the unanticipated participation of urban notables and the commercial middle class in Damascus, two classes that up to that point had been friendlier to French authority and even suspicious of the Hawran peasants.<sup>511</sup> It was the combination of ineffective, often violent colonial administration and mounting Syrian frustration with internationally sanctioned forms of civil protest that helped produce this new solidarity. When petitions to French authorities (and later to the League of Nations) failed to produce

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<sup>510</sup> Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 27-9.

<sup>511</sup> Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 53.



Syrian political or economic advances, revolution loomed as the best means towards independence.

In *The Great Syrian Revolt*, Provence argues that for the revolutionaries of the Hawran, the rural insurrection against French authority was only the latest chapter in an Arab Revolt begun in 1916; this was Arab Nationalism's second wave.<sup>512</sup> The revolt's aims, for example, bore striking similarity to those of the WWI-era Arab nationalists: leader Sultan al-Atrash declared in July 1925 that his revolutionaries demanded "complete independence for Arab Syria," "the creation of a national government, with the free election of a constitutive assembly," and significantly, the immediate evacuation of occupying French soldiers and "the creation of a national army" in their place.<sup>513</sup> If al-Atrash drew any simile between his own loose confederation of Arab militias and those of Emir Faysal the previous decade, the generals of the French Mandate took a similarly hard line against his movement. A series of violent counterinsurgency campaigns and collective punishments in the countryside backfired, and by late 1925, French authorities in Damascus feared a general uprising in Syria's major cities. With famously little investigation or warning, the newly appointed French High Commissioner, General Maurice Sarrail ordered an aerial bombardment of quarters of Damascus believed to be sympathetic with the Revolt in October 1925.<sup>514</sup> The bombardment killed an estimated 1,200 unarmed civilians, was internationally condemned, and earned General Sarrail a place alongside Cemal Pasha among the most brutal of Syria's military occupiers. And like Cemal Pasha's 1916 mass hanging of Syrian dissenters, the bombardment of Damascus thrust political shockwaves into the diaspora, shaking apart perceptions of French legitimacy among Syrians and Lebanese

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<sup>512</sup> Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 42-3.

<sup>513</sup> Denise Ammoun, *Histoire du Liban Contemporain I: 1860-1943* (Paris, Fayard, 1997), 290.

<sup>514</sup> Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 37; Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 92.

emigrants and reigniting the nationalist political movements headquartered there.

For Amin Arslan, both a member of the Druze elite and a former French partner, the Mandatory government's utter disregard for the humanity of Syrian civilians and the "ceaselessly repeated idea by Poincaré, Briand, and the majority of the French newspapers... that the Syrians themselves wanted and solicited the French Mandate" proved that the spirit of France's mission in Syria was not progress and prosperity but rather and ugly "disguised colonialism" [*un sistema de colonización disfrazada*].<sup>515</sup> Arslan began agitating on behalf of the Revolution, giving talks in support of Sultan al-Atrash and against the Mandate, writing South American newspapers, and collecting funds from the *mahjar* to remit to victims of the bombardment. In 1926, Arslan amalgamated all of these critiques into a volume in Spanish entitled, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*. Directed towards the Argentinian reading public, Arslan sent copies of the text to major Argentinian newspapers for review and soon after began a speaking tour, contextualizing the Great Syrian Revolt as an indigenous people's revolution against a brutal and dehumanizing imperial regime. In these speaking engagements, Arslan particularly drew parallels between the Syrian revolutionaries and the Indian nationalists then contesting British authority: "It is natural that the educated Indian people would want autonomy and independence. They no doubt want what all people everywhere crave: to own their homes, for better or worse, poor or rich, it doesn't matter. What matters to such people is, in a word, their liberty and independence." Arslan's book was directed at a Spanish speaking audience, but he simultaneously reached the immigrant Syrian community through a political weekly called *al-Istiqlal*, also established in 1926.

In *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, Arslan's arguments about the

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<sup>515</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 28, 42.

Mandate's illegitimacy were two-fold. First, he argued that Syrians were not consulted in the division of *bilad al-sham*:

“And in an instant, they [Britain and France, in 1916] traced over a map, carving a zone A and a zone B, this zone Blue and the other Red, and then Great Britain said to France, ‘let us part!’ just as they had done with the German colonies in Africa. The division was made, without painful haggling. BUT THOSE PEOPLE WHO WERE DIVIDED, WERE THEY CONSULTED? NO, IN NO FORM AT ALL.”<sup>516</sup>

Second, Arslan conceded that France's “traditional” relationship with the Maronite Church dated back to 1864, when France “helped Lebanon win an autonomous state within the [Ottoman] Empire.” But he argued that not only did the 300,000 Maronites living in the *Grand Liban* not constitute a representative sample of “a larger Syrian population that has no reason or predilection to maintain sentimental ties to France,”<sup>517</sup> but that Lebanese Maronites were themselves divided over support for the French Mandate:

“Even the brother of the distinguished Maronite Patriarch [Ilyas Huwayyik, France's most significant clerical supporter] has been banished to Corsica alongside several other Maronite notables accused of anti-French politics.”<sup>518</sup>

Upending ideas about the Mandate as “protection” or “progress,” Arslan argued instead that it was a thinly-veiled colonial project, imperial both in intention and execution. On the eve of the 1925 Revolution, Arslan began, there were 80,000 French troops inside Syria, in addition to an expanding bureaucratic civilian staff. He argued that France's motives were primarily economic, and he pointed specifically to the creation of the tobacco monopoly in Syria, speculation in Syrian agriculture, and the pegging of Syria's currency to the Franc.<sup>519</sup> Quoting liberally from

<sup>516</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 24, caps in original.

<sup>517</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 24.

<sup>518</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 44.

<sup>519</sup> By the interwar period, French economic interests in the Levant were already trenchant. During the nineteenth century, for instance, French companies provided half of the investment capital employed in the Lebanese silk

French newspapers, Arslan determined that the preoccupation of French educated society with Syria's potential as a consumer market revealed the Mandate as an exploitive imperial project comparable with African colonization; he cited a 15 January 1926 *Le Temps* article in particular, "in economic terms, France has everything to gain in the Levant. Syria and Lebanon should become priority markets for French products."<sup>520</sup>

Arslan pointed to a number of ways that French colonial authorities used the diplomatic service to gather intelligence, domesticate, prohibit, and even punish political activism from abroad. Despite the Mandate's official rhetoric to the contrary, Arslan argued that "the diplomatic and consular representation provided to Syrians and Lebanese [living] abroad are entirely controlled by the larger French Consulate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."<sup>521</sup> The Buenos Aires office was particularly consumed with press censorship,

"freedoms of speech and press are totally curtailed [in Syria]... As the local press was muzzled by preventative censorship, only the free émigré periodicals became the venue for venting anger, dissent, and indignation against [France's] violent acts. But at the mere mention of independence, the French prohibit all periodicals from abroad."<sup>522</sup>

Meanwhile, the French Consul in Buenos Aires charged its dragoman, Shukri Abi Sa'ab, with the unenviable task of monitoring Arslan's movements and political activism, countering his many public statements, begging Argentinian newspapers and statesmen to ignore Arslan's entreaties, and disrupting Arslan's travel plans where possible. And with the French Mandate's Consular office at his disposal, Abi Sa'ab had a potent means of clipping Arslan's wings: the denial of

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industry; Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2002), 154-6. And during the Mandate, French authorities frequently discussed agricultural reform and the possibility of introducing a cotton industry as a means of improving the Syrian countryside's profitability; see Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 50-2.

<sup>520</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 46-8.

<sup>521</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 34.

<sup>522</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 34, 118.

travel permissions, especially after 1926, when the French invalidated the Ottoman passports and identity papers held by most Syrian immigrants in the county.

Writing in Spanish and circulated to Argentinian diplomats, the South American press, Amin Arslan's *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés* was clearly directed at a South American audience. Arslan's argument was similarly framed to fit within the socialist discourse of the time, and the book was a continuation of discussions Arslan had been having with leaders in the socialist movement for nearly a decade. Arslan's bilingualism in publishing reflected his desire to effectively translate anticolonial Arab nationalism for an international leftist audience; his early publication, *La Nota*, had integrated articles on the "Syrian Question" in conversation with Argentina's most well-known socialist voices, and his Arabic title, *al-Istiqlal*, incorporated Spanish-language reporting (as did two other titles in this chapter: *al-Islah* and *Diario Siriolibanes*). Arslan produced a collection of political writings during the 1920s, all in Spanish and focused on the problems of colonialism in the Mashriq.<sup>523</sup> Of course, the increasing bilingualism of the Syrian press in Buenos Aires reflects changes occurring within the Syrian community as well as practical concerns: during the 1920s, progressively larger numbers of Syrians raised in Argentina spoke Spanish as their first language, not Arabic.<sup>524</sup> Similarly, in 1928 the city's Chamber of Commerce levied a tax on materials printed in foreign languages; bilingual publications remained exempt.<sup>525</sup> The decision to print in Spanish (or in both Arabic

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<sup>523</sup> Among Arslan's Spanish language texts: *A verdad sobre el harén* (1916); *Final de un idilio* (1917), *Recuerdos de Oriente* (1925), *Misterios del Oriente* (1932), *La verdadera historia de 'las Desencantadas'* (1935), and *Los Árabes* (published posthumously in 1941). Each text sought to illustrate aspects of eastern culture and politics to an Argentinian audience, and Arslan was particularly interested in correcting Orientalist perceptions. See Axel Gasquet, "Historia, leyendas y clichés del Oriente: en la obra de Emir Emin Arslan," *Cuadernos de CILHA (Centro Interdisciplinario de Literatura Hispanoamericana)* 13, no. 16 (2012), 107-9.

<sup>524</sup> *Al-Islah* introduced its Spanish language section in September 1928, as a means of reaching young Syrians in the city as well as encouraging new readers among Spanish speaking Argentinians. Jurj Sawaya, "Min Mudir al-Tahrir," *al-Islah* 28 August 1928, 6-7.

<sup>525</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, "al-Sihafiyun tahta al-Mitraqa," *al-Islah* 14 September 1928, 5.

and Spanish) was the result of practical considerations and the changing vernacular of the Syrian community itself. In Arslan's case, however, the decision to print in Spanish was a pointed attempt to address the Argentinian Left and foster support for Syria's revolutionaries against the French Mandatory state.

The international Left, however, remained unconvinced by Arslan's argument that Syria's revolutionaries were liberators or that, by extension, the French Mandate was a colonial project in the first place. The Socialist Party (a party which Amin Arslan, like his more well-known cousin, Shakib, belonged to) spoke out in protest of France's 1925 bombardment of Damascus, but theirs was a protest against the Mandate's failure to inform Argentina's diplomatic staff of the strike ahead of time. A Belgian party leader, Emile Vandervelde, drafted a public letter of protest to the French government, claiming that the first indicator of the imminent bombardment that diplomatic staff received was "when French troops simply quit their posts and these [officers] had no hope for protection by them." In 1925, Vandervelde expressed his outrage that France had ignored its "obligation towards, and responsibility for, the lives and well-being of diplomats in the city during these extraordinary events," and also his surprise that "despite French [press] releases to the contrary... the general Muslim population of Damascus has protected the [city's] Christians and Jews, including those [of us] who are foreigners, with a grand and spontaneous outpouring of benevolent relief."<sup>526</sup> In the aftermath of the bombing, Vandervelde thanked the citizens of Damascus for their protection of non-Muslims and foreign diplomats, but he was otherwise silent on the massive civilian losses suffered by that very population. And in international Socialist circles, Vandervelde held fast to his alliance with France, denying that the Syrian Mandate was "colonial" in intention or execution. Vandervelde's statements were

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<sup>526</sup> October 1925 telegram as reproduced in George E. Sawaya, "Ha Llegado un Lier: Quien es M. Emile Vandervelde," *al-Islah* 11 September 1928, 15.

particularly maddening for Amin Arslan's and co-activist (and fellow bi-lingual publisher) Jurj Sawaya, who wrote of the Socialists, "Meanwhile, Mr. Vandervelde, the blood still runs in our country, which no one has admitted has become a French colony. But for illustrious French allies like yourself, of course, willingness to hide the piracy of the colonial imperialist parties is necessary to protect one's other socialist assertions."<sup>527</sup>

Painfully aware of Arslan's continuing efforts to organize support for the Syrian Revolt, in early 1926 the French Foreign Ministry went to extreme lengths to curtail possible return migration of politicized Syrians. The Consulate's provision, legitimation, and abrogation of travel and identity documents became a means of containing Syrian activism and of punishing dissenters. In April 1926, for example, the French Consulate circulated an open letter to the Syrians of Argentina, announcing that the entire community (then 170,000 strong according to Arslan) had four months to seek naturalization as French Mandatory citizens. Those who refused compliance, the letter said, would be considered Turkish subjects by the nation of France. The threat of mass denationalization was intended to encourage submission to French authority but also gave the Consulate the power to retain politically desirable Syrian and Lebanese emigrants while disowning troublemakers. The letter was dressed up in the language of international government, and cited the planned expiration of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne as the reason for the new policy. What France had done in actuality, however, was push the Syrian community of Argentina to the brink of statelessness, a maneuver that would impact whether they could legally seek employment, travel, petition for their rights, or even pursue Argentinian citizenship. It is not difficult to imagine that such a twist would strike the community like lightning.

And lightning did strike. In his public response, Amin Arslan recalled that the

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<sup>527</sup> Sawaya, "Ha Llegado un Lie: Quien es M. Emilio Vandervelde," 16.

announcement “was followed by an explosive indignation and anger.” In his book, Arslan wrote,

“It was not enough for the French to occupy our country militarily, nor take our gold [standard economy] and replace it with paper Francs, nor flood our government office with their functionaries. Now, after putting our country to blood and fire, they want to persecute us until the world’s end?”<sup>528</sup>

The four-month deadline lapsed, and in August 1926 over 100,000 Syrians and Lebanese living in Argentina became Turkish citizens on paper, a fact that the Turkish government did not formally recognize. And a result, the issue of Syrian and Lebanese nationality and citizenship comprised the most recurrent single political issues in the ethnic press in the late 1920s. The French Mandate government did little to correct the nationality issue for Syrian and Lebanese emigrants before 1928, however, when in the middle of a diplomatic conflict with Turkey over the Sanjak of Alexandretta, the Turkish government drafted the Turkish Nationality Act no. 1312, the first to lay claim upon former Ottoman subjects living beyond the territory of Turkey.<sup>529</sup> The Mandate’s dragoman in Buenos Aires, Shukri Abi Sa‘ab, wrote to the High Commissioner in Beirut that 90 percent of the Syrians and Lebanese in Argentina still had not opted for French Mandatory citizenship, making them susceptible to Turkish authority if Turkey so wishes to claim them.<sup>530</sup>

*Revolution in Exile: Emigrant Arab Nationalism and the Syrian National Bloc, 1928-1930*

The Great Syrian Revolt began with rural armed insurrection, seemingly-spontaneous episodes of mass disobedience in the cities, and dramatic rebel victories punctuated by brutal French counterinsurgency campaigns, collective punishment, and bombardments. But it ended

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<sup>528</sup> Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 120.

<sup>529</sup> Like the Lebanese Nationality Regulation of 1925, the Turkish Nationality Act 1312/1928 combined *jus sanguinis* with a territorial concept of nationality, but the 1928 law was the first time that post-Ottoman Turkey integrated the logic of *jus sanguinis* into its laws regarding nationality; Zeynep Kadirbeyoglu, “Changing Conceptions of Citizenship in Turkey,” in Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig, and Wiebke Sievers, eds., *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 433.

<sup>530</sup> In 1928, Shukri Abi Sa‘ab clearly saw this as a threat, given that France and the new nation of Turkey were at loggerheads over the territory of Alexandretta. June 1928 memo cited by Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Ideologies*, 137.



less assertively, in Michael Provence's words, "with the slow and inexorable reassertion of government control over the devastated countryside, district by district." By 1927, he concludes, "militant popular resistance was dead," and moderate nationalist figures among Syria's traditional urban elite made new moves "to rule under the auspices of, and in cooperation with, the imperial power."<sup>531</sup> French troops pushed revolutionary leaders Sultan al-Atrash and Muhammad Izz al-Din al-Halabi south, into Wadi Sirhan (in Transjordanian territory) where they continued to launch reprisals and send public demands through 1927, but where their political relevance was indubitably checkmated.<sup>532</sup> In 1928, French High Commissioner Henry Ponsot announced his desire to create a Constitutive Assembly for Syria, a representative body comprised of moderate Syrian nationalists to draw up a constitutional charter. Ponsot's objectives were clear: by channeling nationalist feeling into institutions cooperative with the Mandate, the French High Commissioner's office could pick their opponents from among Syria's urban elite (the Constitutive Assembly was largely comprised of Damascenes from notable families) and exclude more radical political voices by delegitimizing them. The formation of the Constitutive Assembly also satisfied, for a time, growing demands by French liberals back home that France par down its direct rule of the Mashriq as well as the League of Nations.

Philip Khoury argues that Ponsot's strategy had the effect of fostering a shift in both the tone of Syria's nationalist movement and in the faces of its leaders: the Damascene educated elite framed the goals of national independence within a negotiated power-sharing strategy called "honorable cooperation" [*al-ta'wun al-ma'qul*].<sup>533</sup> By participating in Ponsot's Constitutive Assembly, these elites maintained political order and stability while also pressing for France's

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<sup>531</sup> Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 141.

<sup>532</sup> T'au al-'Imad (Felipe Homad), "fi-Sabil al-Mujahidin al-Ahrar," *al-Islah* 17 August 1928, 11;

<sup>533</sup> Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 539.

fulfillment of its Mandatory obligations, enshrined in article 22 of the League of Nations Charter. National economic development, progressive steps towards national sovereignty, and the construction of a Syrian constitutional system were the goals of the new Syrian nationalist movement. In summer 1928, the Constitutive Assembly got to work on drafting a Syrian Constitution, the first since the French occupation in 1920. A new chapter in Syrian politics opened, one which eschewed militancy in favor of order, progress, and cooperation with the Mandate. But among the exiles, emigrants, and Arab nationalists abroad, the trend away from revolutionary action was an unwelcome one, and Amin Arslan, Jurj Sawaya, Jurj 'Assaf, and other activists in Buenos Aires became critical not only of the Mandate itself, but with the Syrian nationalists of Ponsot's Constitutive Assembly of 1928 and the Syrian National Bloc [*al-kutla al-wataniyya*] which emerged after it. Using language that was increasingly pan-Arab and world-conscious, these men compared Syria's colonial present with the colonial history of the Americas. If Syrians wanted to live in an independent constitutional Republic, they asked, why not follow the examples of the constitutional Republics of the Americas? And how many of these exemplary republics, they continued, were granted their liberty by politely asking for it?

In August 1928, Syria's Constitutive Assembly submitted its draft for a Syrian Constitution to the French Foreign Ministry in Paris. As a delegation of Syrian representatives debated the document's merits with the French government, copies of the Constitution were printed and circulated broadly across both Syria and the *mahjar*. Its articles included a "declaration of an expeditious independence," as well as articles outlining a unicameral parliamentary system, freedoms of speech and political expression, and universal suffrage for Syrian men at 25 years old. The document included demands that Syria's relationship with Lebanon be reevaluated (e.g. a "declaration of Syrian unity") and it pointedly elided the language

of confessional representation the French had brought to Lebanon. It also demanded that Arabic (and Arabic alone) be the language of government in the would-be Syrian Republic. These three issues—the relationship with Lebanon, secular representation, and Arab self-government—reflected the primary points of moderate nationalist opposition to French rule in Syria.<sup>534</sup> In the weeks to come, Henry Ponsot reject the document on the grounds that some of its terms—specifically, its declaration of Syrian unity, its demand for a Syrian national army, and the empowerment of a Syrian president in matters previously reserved by the Mandate’s High Commissioner (specifically, the right to enact a foreign policy)—violated the terms of France’s Mandate in Syria.<sup>535</sup> Ponsot tabled the constitutional issue and summarily dissolved the Constitutive Assembly, demonstrating the cost of non-compliance to French policy objectives in Syria and Lebanon. With that, Syrian politics entered a period of harried stalemate that would last two full years.

Stunned by the dissolution of the Constitutive Assembly, many of its former members subsequently formed the Syrian National Bloc [*al-kutla al-wataniyya*]. Less a political party than a representative umbrella organization with a moderate nationalist compass, the National Bloc sought the progressive implementation of steps towards a Syrian constitutional republic through negotiations with the French and very often, appeals to the League of Nations.<sup>536</sup> The Bloc’s emergence in 1928 was significant in that it harnessed the political energies of elite Syrian activists across a broad political spectrum, and by the 1930s, its structures began to form the nucleus of the Syrian state that would emerge after Independence. However, in its first two years, the Bloc’s gains were quite small, and the French persistently refused to entertain its larger

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<sup>534</sup> “al-Jam‘iyya al-Suriyya al-‘Arabiyya fi-Baris,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 3; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 336, 340-3.

<sup>535</sup> Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 351-9; Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate*, 184-5.

<sup>536</sup> Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 262-5.

demands for national unity, a Syrian army, and greater administrative autonomy. Among the Bloc's most significant concessions wrested in 1928 was a general amnesty for Syrians who participated in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927, with the notable exceptions of the revolt's leaders, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar and Sultan al-Atrash, both of whom continued to agitate for armed insurrection against the Mandate from outside Syria.<sup>537</sup>

Arab nationalists in Buenos Aires watched the events of 1928 with a critical eye. On one hand, Amin Arslan and his fellow activists saw a constitutional, Republican Syria as the only viable way forward for their homeland. On the other hand, they each argued that France's interests in Syria ran contrary this goal and they questioned the validity of the National Bloc's "honorable cooperation" strategy. Jurj 'Assaf, for example, called the Syrian National Bloc an historical "absurdity" and questioned why Syrians "living in Damascus, once the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate... would [now] make themselves willingly beholden to French domestic politics."<sup>538</sup> 'Assaf's problem was not the validity of the project for a Syrian Constitution itself. He agreed that a Constitution would "be a necessary foundation for a free Syria." 'Assaf's critique centered on the validity of "honorable cooperation" as a means of liberating Syria; he argued that the use of armed force (or at least, its legitimacy) presented the only proven means of liberating a territory from foreign colonialism.<sup>539</sup> Like many Syrian American Arab nationalists, 'Assaf drew parallels between Syria's colonial predicament and the history of anti-colonial independence movements in the Americas: the United States, Brazil, and particularly Argentina. According to 'Assaf, Argentina's experience with declaring its independence, writing its

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<sup>537</sup> Fawzi al-Ghazi, "Siyasa al-Kutla al-Wataniyya al-Suriyya," *al-Islah* 21 August 1928, 2; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 331-2.

<sup>538</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, "Dustur al-Arjintin wa-Dustur Suriya," *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 7.

<sup>539</sup> This radical tendency was by no means limited to activists in the *mahjar*. Philip Khoury concludes of Damascene activists that "At the end of 1929, there was talk among radical nationalists of scrapping the Bloc strategy of 'honorable cooperation' altogether." Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 347.

constitution, and unifying its divided provincial territories could serve as a model for Syria's nationalist movement. Argentinians, he explained, had two major national holidays, marking three historical events: 25 March, which marked the 1810 declaration of Independence from Spain, and 9 July, which simultaneously commemorated the Tucuman Congress of 1816 (a meeting which yielded the first of Argentina's articles of Confederation), and the ratification of Argentina's Constitution in 1853:

“These are dates of remembrance for all Argentinians. For the free Syrian-Argentinians who enjoy watching [the celebrations], they anticipate the same for the homeland with hearts ablaze and eyes full of tears. They [Syrian Argentinians] wish to ‘remember’ their land, which demanded its independence and a self-governing constitution.”<sup>540</sup>

But for ‘Assaf, each chapter of Argentina's political emancipation depended upon the willingness of its leaders to use armed force: the heroes of his history were all generals (and indeed, most of those present in 1810, 1816, and 1853 had been). ‘Assaf had been a supporter of the Great Syrian Revolt, was a partisan of ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, and with Jurj Sawaya had since founded the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya*, a political party that continued to monetarily support Sultan al-Atrash and the insurrectionists contained at Wadi Sirhan.<sup>541</sup> ‘Assaf firmly argued that the appeals of French officials like Henri Ponsot and international organizations like the League of Nations were merely a ruse, designed to disarm and contain the nationalist movement. By collaborating with the French to draw up a Constitution, ‘Assaf proclaimed that the document was not only invalid because it was silent about Syria's right to military autonomy, but that the Syrian Constitutive Assembly (and by extension, the Syrian National Bloc) had allowed the Independence question “to become beholden to French domestic politics.”

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<sup>540</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “Dustur al-Arjintin wa-Dustur Suriya,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 7.

<sup>541</sup> According to Amin Arslan's biographers, ‘Ajaj and Khaldun Nuwayhid, Amin Arslan and Jurj Sawaya were the two most significant South American donors to the revolutionaries in Wadi Sirhan; Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan*, 74.

Only one way out was possible, concluded ‘Assaf: Syrians must follow the example of successful anti-colonial American revolutions, tossing aside the demands of colonial powers and the League of Nations. Liberation came at the price of armed insurrection:

“Where is this revolution’s General [José de] San Martín?... Where is our Syrian General [José] Urquiza who will turn to those who ask for our ‘Program’ [referring to Henry Ponsot’s 1928 language requesting a list of Constitutional demands] and say: ‘Our plan is that our soldiers will carry your heads on their pikes, to remind all that our Revolutionary aspirations are not merely dreams. Our goals have not changed, ever: complete independence.’”<sup>542</sup>

A Syrian Constitution was the goal, ‘Assaf added, but the drafting of civilian charters could not create an authentic national independence that did not exist: “Argentina’s Tucuman Congress [of 1816], after all, only solidified an Independence that was already apparent.” Constitutions had no benefit for an unfree people, because as Jurj Sawaya concluded on the matter that same week, “there cannot be cooperation or understanding between the prey and his predator.”<sup>543</sup>

At the same time, ‘Assaf’s political party, *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya*, maintained that Argentinian Independence went hand in hand with unification, a theme that ‘Assaf connected to both Syria’s relationship to Lebanon as well as to the greater Arab region. ‘Assaf saw Lebanese independence as well as the British Mandates in Transjordan, Iraq, and Palestine as unnatural forms of colonial divide and rule, and he predicted that with the removal of the imperial regimes, a reunification at the force of arms might even be necessary. Argentina’s historical unification served him with an apt historical cognate, particularly in the example of Greco-Argentinian general [Bartolomé] Mitre, who after 1853 put down a series of local rebellions [*thawrat ahliyya*] and “who halted the emergence of provincial ‘dictatorships’” to preserve Argentina’s territorial integrity.<sup>544</sup>

<sup>542</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “Dustur al-Arjintin wa-Dustur Suriya,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 7.

<sup>543</sup> Jurj Sawaya, “Fud al-Jam‘iyya al-Tasisiyya fi-Dimashq,” *al-Islah* 17 August 1928, 7.

<sup>544</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “Dustur al-Arjintin wa-Dustur Suriya,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 7.

‘Assaf is less clear about *which* regional rebellions a Syrian general Mitre would target, but elsewhere in *al-Islah* he targeted the issue of the *Grand Liban*’s separation from Syria as a colonial manifestation, a position that concurred with the demands of the *Hizb al-Istiqlal*’s demand for reunification. For ‘Assaf, partition and foreign interference went hand in hand:

“Among the strangest occurrences that the history of the Syrian-Lebanese people has recorded during their struggle for Independence, which has brought them under foreign control—first by the English, then the French—is the faction within them [the Syrian-Lebanese people] that requested this foreign control, supporting it and arguing—according to their belief—that a foreign occupier will give them [back] their lands!”<sup>545</sup>

In Lebanon, ‘Assaf continued that the French had politicized confessional identities to the point of “promoting religious extremism.” The parliamentary system built in Lebanon, he concluded, “cannot undertake any measures to smooth the divisions issued into the hearts of patriots from different *mathhabs* or religions.” The result, he concluded powerfully, was that in Lebanon, “each [sect] works according to his own interests.”<sup>546</sup>

In addition to the issue of Lebanon, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya* supported a militant response to the entire Mandate system, opposing British and French imperialism across the Arab world (including in Egypt, then under the monarchy of Fu‘ad) as well as against the emerging Zionist state in Palestine. Calling itself a “party of nationalist renaissance [*al-nahḍa al-qawmiyya*] in South America,” the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* saw itself not only as a Syrian organization but an Arab one, “within it are Arabs from every locale and every people, from Syria or Lebanon,

<sup>545</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “Bayna al-Istiqlal wa-l-Ihtilal: al-Ta‘assub al-Dini,” *al-Islah* 14 August 1928, 5.

<sup>546</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “Bayna al-Istiqlal wa-l-Ihtilal: al-Ta‘assub al-Dini,” *al-Islah* 14 August 1928, 5. Historians have also analyzed French policy in Lebanon and Syria with regards to sect and confessional representation, concluding that “with religious identity valorized as the most important of the ties that bind, the French saw the Levant as a complex, fragile mosaic of ethno-religious communities locked in internecine conflict.” Each was seen as perpetually separate and self-contained, necessitating a foreign protectorate as well as a political system that channeled (rather than opposed) communal politics in a Levantine Republic. See Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, 25-6; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 53; Benjamin White, “The Nation-State and the Emergence of ‘Minorities’ in Syria,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7, no. 1 (2007), 64-85.

or Palestine primarily, but also from East Jordan and any other Arab lands that are presently under the foreign yoke [al-nīr al-ājnabī] and who want to remove the chains of oppression.”<sup>547</sup>

Founded by Jurj ‘Assaf and Jurj Sawaya in summer 1928, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya* was the earliest pan-Arab political party in the *mahjar*. It placed the suffering and struggle of all of the Arab peoples within a single political field and prescribed ethnic unity and anti-imperialist solidarity as a means of liberation. The struggle against colonialism, furthermore, was not merely a national one, it was a pan-Arab one:

“[We seek] not only complete independence for Syria... it is also hoped that these advances [in Syria] will themselves be part of a greater set of advancements of all of the Arab peoples, who wish to fling the yokes from upon their shoulders and instead enjoy self-government with the other advanced peoples.”<sup>548</sup>

The party was ideologically invested in Shakib Arslan’s and ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar’s ongoing critiques of moderate Syrian nationalism, and it regularly issued statements in support of armed revolt and raised funds for “our soldiers of the language of dād”<sup>549</sup> [*lughat al-dād*] in the hopes of re-launching the stalled Syrian Revolt.<sup>550</sup>

The *Hizb al-Istiqlal*’s militancy and insistence upon Syria’s liberation at the force of arms was in response to what its leaders saw as the central hypocrisy of the French Mandate: the unwillingness of Henri Ponsot and other French officials to allow the Syrians under their tutelage autonomy, particularly in military and educational affairs. The *Hizb al-Istiqlal*’s organizing

<sup>547</sup> “Hizb Istiqlal al-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya,” *al-Islah* 17 July 1928, 7.

<sup>548</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “al-Wataniyya fi Suriya,” *al-Islah* 17 August 1928, 5.

<sup>549</sup> The reference to *lughat al-dād* (as a referent for an Arabophone political identity) was significant here because in a time when most nationalist parties were still making territorial or historicist claims upon a national identity or past, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* centered on the common language of all Arab peoples. The idea that all Arabic speakers shared a common past and a common struggle against foreign imperialism would become hegemonic in the years after WWII.

<sup>550</sup> In August 1928 alone, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya* reported to *al-Islah* that 6,247 “riyals” were raised for the *mujahidin* awaiting reentry into Syria. The funds went principally to al-Atrash’s men in Wadi Sirhan, but the report also explains that a portion of the proceeds went to Dera’a, in southern Syria; T’au al-‘Imad (Felipe Homad), “fi-Sabil al-Mujahidin al-Ahrar,” *al-Islah* 17 August 1928, 11.



manifesto declared “that all people should bear the right to enjoy their freedom, independence, and autonomous administration of their affairs,” and equate French denial of these rights to the Arab people is tantamount to an act of War. Negotiations, “honorable cooperation,” and appeals to the international forum had not been fruitful, and the party held that “despite that the Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian people, as well of other Arab peoples, have been vocal in their demands for these rights, they are denied them.”<sup>551</sup> The most significant national right, the right to military autonomy, the French quite clearly opposed any significant moves towards the development of a standing army. Indeed, in August 1928, Henry Ponsot scrapped the first Syrian Constitution drafted by his Constitutive Assembly over disagreements about the development of a Syrian national army,<sup>552</sup> a turn of events that shocked moderate Damascene nationalists but left Jurj Sawaya, Jurj ‘Assaf, and the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in Argentina chagrined but unsurprised.<sup>553</sup>

Syrian writers in Buenos Aires also called attention to the disconnect between liberal French political values and the illiberal method embraced in administering French colonies abroad.<sup>554</sup> Another member of *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, Ibrahim Yunis, wrote in 1928 that although France was the world’s birthplace for individual freedoms, liberty, and the values of enlightened government, the French simultaneously denied these same virtues to lands under their tutelage: “The French people want to monopolize freedom and independence for themselves, while binding others in chains and limiting those same liberties they proclaim to be a ‘natural’ right.” Instead of “civilizing” Syria as the Mandate (Yunis argued) purported was its project, France

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<sup>551</sup> “Hizb Istiqlal al-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya,” *al-Islah* 17 July 1928, 7.

<sup>552</sup> Peter Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria, 1927-1936* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 27-30; Eyal Zisser, “Writing a Constitution: Constitutional Debates in Syria in the Mandate Period,” in Christoph Schumann, ed., *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late Nineteenth Century until the 1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 204.

<sup>553</sup> Jurj Sawaya, “Fud al-Jam‘iyya al-Tasisiyya fi-Dimashq,” *al-Islah* 17 August 1928, 7.

<sup>554</sup> This theme was similarly pursued by Syrian writers at home, and as Peter Sluglett demonstrates, by Iraqis contesting British control over their territory; Peter Sluglett, “The Mandate System: High Ideals, Illiberal Practices,” in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 29-32, 34-6.

instead “continues a campaign of imperialism and military occupation... for the purpose of extracting our wealth and resources.”<sup>555</sup> Despite the fact that France justified its Mandate in Syria in liberal terms, they quickly resort to authoritarian measures when faced with Syrian resistance.<sup>556</sup> Yunis opined that the Syrians could only face force with force.

As both emigrants and nationalists, the leaders of the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* had a complex relationship to the issue of Syria’s continuing emigration. On one hand, these men fought battles with the French Consulate to maintain a liberal, open migration regime in place between Mandatory Syria and the Argentine Republic. On the other hand, however, emigration presented a problem for the Syrian nation, and mounting demand for access to travel papers and work outside of Syria was proof that France had failed to build a viable political system in the Mashriq. Ibrahim Yunis, for example, drew a direct causational link between French colonialism in Syria and Lebanon and the continuing problem of emigration. By failing to provide needed educational and economic infrastructure in Syria, average Syrians found their country stunted and wanting of opportunity: “Where are the national schools... that will establish [in Syria] a leadership for the nation’s sons? Where are the public works, planning in economics and the arts that would lighten the hearts of the poor and undercut the [necessity for] emigration?”<sup>557</sup> Beyond blaming French maladministration for the emigration problem (a problem that the Mandate’s consular system was, after all, straining to contain), Yunis’s line of questioning pointed out that the Mandate’s stated goals—to build a viable political system in Syria in preparation for independence—had yet to be seriously addressed.

Observing the political deadlock between the moderate nationalist movement at home

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<sup>555</sup> Ibrahim Yunus, “Fransa fi-Suriya wa-Lubnan,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 12.

<sup>556</sup> Christoph Schuman, “Introduction,” in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 6.

<sup>557</sup> Ibrahim Yunus, “Fransa fi-Suriya wa-Lubnan,” *al-Islah* 7 August 1928, 12.

and the French Mandatory authorities, Jurj Sawaya, Jurj 'Assaf, Amin Arslan, and others in the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya* criticized both and held fast to a hope for a second Revolt against the Mandate. In 1928, the Syrian National Bloc drafted an appeal to the League of Nations which accused France of failing to comply to the terms of the Mandate, specifically, to the requirement to build representative political infrastructure in Syria. Among other things, the National Bloc's delegation demanded complete independence for Syria and its reunification with Lebanon. Unprepared to censure France and award the Syrian National Bloc its demands, the League of Nations declined to intervene in Syria. For Syrian National Bloc leaders, the League's refusal underlined that any Syrian independence at all would come through piece-meal, bilateral negotiation with the French. But for the radical Arab nationalists of Argentina's *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya*, the League of Nations had proven itself not an international organization of high-minded ideals but a cover for European colonialism and "serving the ignoble ambitions of France and England."<sup>558</sup> In an editorial in *al-Islah*, Jurj Sawaya wrote:

"It is apparently not enough that they [the League] has declared a Mandate over Syria, a country and nation which has now demonstrated its love for liberty and independence to the point of Revolution; not enough that the defenseless Damascus has been bombarded in a cowardly manner, or that our men were hoisted to the gallows for committing the 'terroristic crime' of loving their native country... This Mandate has exploited its converts and apostles [Syrians cooperative with the Mandate], cowing them into weak submission. The rest are treated as in the times of crudest barbarity, as though they were black slaves in African colonies! With this evidence in place, for all of the world to see, we declare that the League of Nations, itself an invention of war, is in practice a camouflage in service to European imperial interests."<sup>559</sup>

Sawaya's criticism of the League of Nations did not stop there, or with Syrian issues; from 1928 forward his reporting about the organization highlighted his assertion that the League was invested in producing and maintaining "anachronistic" forms of governance in parts of the world beyond Europe.

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<sup>558</sup> Jurj Sawaya, "La Cruel Evidencia," *al-Islah* 21 September 1928, 12.

<sup>559</sup> Sawaya, "La Cruel Evidencia," 12.

Sawaya resented the League's support for monarchies in particular, and wrote at length about the preservation of the Egyptian monarchy under Fu'ad as well as the imposition of (or the "regression to" in Sawaya's words) a monarchy in Albania under Ahmet Muhtar Bey Zogú in 1928.<sup>560</sup> Of Egypt, Sawaya described Fu'ad as a British puppet, installed to impose foreign rule on the Arab people, "the impediments facing Egyptians are much like those in Syria, differing very little. In the Egyptian case, they are under the absolute domination King Fu'ad, whose irritating regime is just like that of Msr. Ponsot in Syria."<sup>561</sup> Sawaya's pan-Arab sensibilities explain his solidarity with the Egyptians, but his connection to Albania was a different matter. After World War I, Ahmet Muhtar Bey Zogú emerged as Albania's leader in 1924 after a period of intense political instability and competition with the allies of Hasan Prishtina, leader of the Albanian National Movement. Sawaya saw Prishtina's platform for Albanian independence as a clear cognate for Syria: Prishtina's movement was rooted in demands for constitutional self-determination, administrative autonomy, linguistic nationalism, and an uncompromising position on the legitimacy of military force (e.g. the maintenance of a strong Albanian army). And like in Syria, Prishtina's hardline stance against foreign intervention made him suspicious of the League of Nations.<sup>562</sup> Empowered by support from the French and the League of Nations empowered Prishtina's rival, Ahmet Zogú, who then pushed the Albanian Nationalist Movement underground. According to Sawaya, Zogú owed his presidency and his subsequent coronation as Albania's monarch to the League of Nations.

But the Albanian crown came at a cost: one of King Zogú's first official acts was his signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. The Kellogg-Briand Pact a the first in a series of multilateral treaties which, while establishing new international legal norms for conflict resolution, sovereignty, and diplomatic protocol, sought to delegitimize recourse to armed conflict as a means of national resistance. Sawaya saw the document as undermining the rights of colonized nations to repel their occupiers through

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<sup>560</sup> Jurj Sawaya, "Un Anachronismo," *al-Islah* 25 September 1928, 15.

<sup>561</sup> Sawaya, "La Cruel Evidencia," 12.

<sup>562</sup> In 1919, Prishtina headed a Kosovar delegation which applied for an audience with the Paris Peace Conference; their request was denied.

armed insurrection, and he bristled against news that France sought to impose the treaty on its allies. Albania's signing of the document appeared an imperialist *quid pro quo*: international legitimacy at the cost of foregoing national sovereignty. "We Syrians express our sympathies to the Albanian people," wrote Sawaya, "for they will endure this anachronistic reign at such cost."<sup>563</sup>

Sawaya's denunciation of the League of Nations as a veil for a new European colonialism, his critique of the Syrian National Bloc and of moderate nationalism in general, his resentment for the imposition of monarchies on Arab and Muslim peoples by foreign powers, and his prescription of pan-Arab unity and armed insurrection as the necessary means for Syrian (and Arab) liberation all demonstrate an increasingly global anticolonial worldview. For Sawaya and his compatriots in the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya*, theirs became a struggle between the many-headed hydra of European colonialism on behalf of "the subalterns [subalternizados] and weak peoples of the world [los débiles del mundo]."<sup>564</sup> By the end of the 1920s, Sawaya and his partisans freely drew connections between manifestations of this globalized imperialism in ways that earlier nationalist thinkers had not: in late 1928, for instance, Sawaya concluded this of the world under the League of Nations' purview:

"[Albanian monarch] Zogú, [Egyptian king] Fu'ad, the Kellogg[-Briand] Pact, and France's resistance to the evacuation of Romania: all are one single system of colonialism [un sistema de colonización] of entire nations under the Mandates. All of this, in sum, leaves a shocking and unpleasant index, opening up huge questions about our immediate future."<sup>565</sup>

Sawaya's disdain for the creation of monarchies in the Middle East mirrored that of his party's partner then exiled in Cairo, the former Syrian revolutionary 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar. Sawaya and Shahbandar carried on a lively personal correspondence between 1927 and 1929, much of which Sawaya dutifully reproduced in *al-Islah* (in both Spanish and Arabic). In one letter, Shahbandar told Sawaya "the foundation of modern colonialism lies in the creation of kings in our lands; with the monarchy comes the foreigner's boot." Despite the "democratic feelings that prevail in Syria and Lebanon... the kings have

<sup>563</sup> Sawaya, "Un Anachronismo," 15.

<sup>564</sup> Sawaya, "La Cruel Evidencia," 12.

<sup>565</sup> Sawaya, "Un Anachronismo," 15.

been in service to the foreigner, with very few exceptions – Emir Faysal being one of them.”<sup>566</sup> Both Shahbandar and Sawaya presented Faysal’s short-lived monarchy in Syria as the exception to the monarchical rule, because (they argued) his was not a kingdom imposed by a foreign power.<sup>567</sup> In *al-Islah*, anyway, both men remained silent on Faysal’s monarchy in Iraq, imposed by the British after 1921.

*Mandated Migration: The Patronato Sirio-Libanése and the Business of Papers*

The 1926 invalidation of the Ottoman passports and travel documents held by most of Argentina’s Syrian and Lebanese immigrants started with a technicality written into international law; the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne were wholly intended to be a temporary measure to protect former Ottoman subjects as matters of national construction were sorted out post-World War I, after all. But through this technicality the French Mandate government, and particularly the Mandate’s Consulate in Buenos Aires, saw new opportunities to reel in their emigrant constituencies. The Consulate offered (and later began to require) new Syrian and Lebanese immigrants identity papers, travel permissions, and the option to apply for Syrian or Lebanese nationality. Upon arrival to Buenos Aires, Syrians and Lebanese were required to register with the Buenos Aires Consulate and collect these documents. Implicit in this exchange, however, was a documented legitimization of the French Mandate and its domicile not merely over Syria and Lebanon, but also over the diasporic communities. Those who entered Argentina after 1926 increasingly opted for clandestine means, relying on smugglers, traffickers, and the informal network of *simsars* (migration agents) who flourished in the business of visas, identity papers, and off-the-books contracting with local employers.<sup>568</sup> As for those Syrians already in Argentina,

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<sup>566</sup> 24 February 1928 telegram from Cairo, reproduced in ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, “Ara’ Wajiha li-l-Duktur Shahbandar,” *al-Islah* 7 September 1928, 4.

<sup>567</sup> Shahbandar, “Ara’ Wajiha li-l-Duktur Shahbandar,” 5.

<sup>568</sup> Steamship agents, employment brokers, creditors, customs agents, and even recruiters all worked in the capacity of the *simsar*, collaborating (and often competing) within a migration “industry” linking the both human and commercial traffic. The *simsars* could be found in any Syrian or Lebanese community in the Americas, as well as at significant waypoints in the Mediterranean (especially Marseilles). The *simsar* was not merely a Syrian-Lebanese

with decades old Ottoman documents? The overwhelming majority (greater than 99 percent, according to Amin Arslan) did nothing, neglecting to register with the Consulate and quietly allowing their documentation to lapse in August 1926.<sup>569</sup>

Between 1926 and 1928, an individual immigrant's lack of papers meant less than might be assumed: the majority of Syrians in the colony worked within the community's own trades and industries, and those who worked in agriculture or other labors for Argentine employers did not need to resort to Argentinian naturalization.<sup>570</sup> It was in matters of travel that the absence or presence of papers posed a real challenge after 1926. With rates of Syrian immigration into the country rebounding during the 1920s, joined by the rates of return migration and circular travel between Buenos Aires and the port at Beirut, the French Mandate saw the registration of Syrian travelers as a means of managing its subject populations for demographic, economic, as well as political purposes.<sup>571</sup> However, the new registration process required by the Mandatory government in 1926 had an important unintended consequence: it empowered migrant middle-men who worked in the migration "industry" (shipping, credit, or employment agents), many of whom were moved less by loyalty to the French than by profit. Indeed, between 1926 and 1928, a dizzying array of *simsars* emerged in Buenos Aires, individuals who either assisted Syrians in travelling illegally or who filed the registrations paperwork required at the Consulate for a fee.

More concerning for the French was the participation of the colony's political parties in

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phenomenon, either: studies in Italian, Chinese, and Latino labor migration note the presence of this character (calling him a *padrone*, "crimp," or *coyote*, respectively. Alixa Naff, *Becoming American*, 97, 101.

<sup>569</sup> In August 1926, Amin Arslan reported that only 600 Syrians in Buenos Aires had confirmed their new identity with the Mandate (out of around 160,000, a number Arslan insists upon but which historians have argued elsewhere was closer to 100,000 at the time); Arslan, *La Revolución Siria Contra el Mandato Francés*, 124. In 1928, Shukri Abi Sa'ab reported to the French Consul in Buenos Aires that despite the problems associated with not having current identity documents, around 90 percent of Syrians in Argentina had not opted for new papers from the Mandate; Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Identities*, 137.

<sup>570</sup> Klich, "Criollos and Arabic Speakers in Argentina," *Lebanese in the World*, 256.

<sup>571</sup> Sofia D. Martos, *The Balancing Act: Ethnicity, Commerce, and Politics among Syrian and Lebanese Immigrants in Argentina, 1890-1955* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), 230-8.

providing just these services, some of which agitated directly against the Mandate: *al-Jam 'iyya al-Suriyya*, a society which espoused an increasingly anticolonial Syrian nationalism during the 1920s, managed a fee-based service filing registrations at the French Consulate for incoming Syrian immigrants.<sup>572</sup> Groups like it, some Francophile (for instance, *al-Tahalluf al-Lubnani*, a breakaway organization once allied with *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* that counted French dragoman Shukri Abi Sa'ab as a member), others deeply critical of the Mandate, often invested these funds into political causes, including remittance to the Syrian revolutionaries in the Hawran.<sup>573</sup> Clearly, if the French wanted to “usurp from rival claimants... the ‘monopoly over the legitimate means of movement’,” they would have to create not only a documentary regime; they would also need to find a client to oversee the registration process and undermine the immigration grey market.<sup>574</sup>

In 1928, the French Consulate in Buenos Aires found this client in an organization called the Patronato Sirio-Libanése. Called *al-Jam 'iyya al-Suriyya al-Lubnaniyya li-Himayat al-Muhajir* in Arabic, the Patronato Sirio-Libanése on Avenida Corrientes was, in essence, a formal migration agency operating for a fee with the French Consulate's blessing. Its founders were Musa 'Azizi, Musa José Busader, and Juan Ibrahim. Musa 'Azizi, a Syrian merchant and banker originally from Hama, had made his fortune reinvesting capital from his textile firm, La

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<sup>572</sup> *Al-Jam 'iyya al-Suriyya* was the political committee founded by Khalil Sa'adih and Amin Arslan in 1915, which had allied with Shukri Ghanim immediately after the War but which became deeply critical of the French after 1920. Jurj 'Assaf, “Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya,” *al-Islah* 4 September 1928, 5-6.

<sup>573</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, “Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya,” *al-Islah* 4 September 1928, 5-6.

<sup>574</sup> John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport, Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-2.



Dominion Textiles,<sup>575</sup> into the city's Syrian-Lebanese Bank.<sup>576</sup> He served as the Patronato's chairman and president.<sup>577</sup> The Patronato Sirio-Libanése's foundational charter laid out the society's aims and interests: "taking care in a special manner to orient and guide [new Syrian and Lebanese immigrants in Argentina] in their first steps in this hospitable country" by providing loans, temporary housing, and access to employers.<sup>578</sup> But one major distinction set the Patronato apart from other Syrian mutual aid societies then operating in Buenos Aires: 'Azizi committed himself to using the organization to negotiate terms with the Argentinian government, the French Foreign Ministry, and the Mandate's Consul in Argentina. 'Azizi lobbied the French Foreign Ministry for exclusive access to the registration of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to Argentina, and in June 1928 his Patronato was granted this request in the interest of undermining the informal network of *simsars* that had predominated to that point. 'Azizi built upon this partnership with the French Consulate and within months, his organization opened a Beirut office. By late 1928, Musa 'Azizi and his Patronato Sirio-Libanése effectively controlled the flow of migration between Lebanon and Argentina.

For the city's Arab nationalists and the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya*, the institutionalization of the Patronato and its place in the registration of Syrian migrants looked like an illegitimate extension of French power into the diaspora. Jurj 'Assaf, in particular, saw

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<sup>575</sup> *Quien es Quien en la Argentina: Biografías Contemporáneas*, sixth edition (Buenos Aires: Guillermo Kraft, 1955), 60. During World War I, La Dominion Textiles opened a New York City office, managed by his corporation Azize Hnos. NARA M367. Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929. Group 59. War Trade Board to U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Request for Investigation of Azize Hnos with regards to Enemy Trading List, 22 October 1918, document 763.72112a/4132j.

<sup>576</sup> The Syrian-Lebanese Bank of Buenos Aires was founded in 1917 by immigrant merchants Tannus Sawaya and Iskandar Qardahi, and from its earliest days the institution operated in coordination with the Faour Brother Bank in New York City to provide credit to Syrian businessmen as well as new immigrant laborers abroad, while simultaneously facilitating the remittance of cash home. Although not on the original Board, Musa 'Azizi became bank president by the mid-1920s, and the Patronato Sirio grew out from the institution in 1928. Jurj Sawaya, "al-Bank al-Suri al-Lubnani," *al-Islah* 14 August 1928, 4.

<sup>577</sup> Akmir, *al-'Arab fi-l-Arjintin*, 108-9.

<sup>578</sup> "Society Minutes. Founding Constitution, El Patronato Sirio-Libanés" (Saavedra, Buenos Aires, 1928), 1, via Martos, *The Balancing Act*, 249.

the Patronato as the Mandate's "chosen instrument" for the regulation of Syrians abroad.<sup>579</sup> He looked askance at 'Azizi's frequent public statements that his organization stood for the rights of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants and for the homeland's economic development and national progress.<sup>580</sup> In September 1928, 'Assaf argued that contrary to 'Azizi's high-minded claims, his Patronato Sirio-Libanése made migration even more financially strenuous than the simsars his supplanted. Before the Patronato began managing the registration of new immigrants at the French Consulate, 'Assaf pointed out in *al-Islah*, the going rate for the processing of papers had been around twenty-four "riyals," with small deviations between competitors.<sup>581</sup> But when the Patronato Sirio-Libanése took over the process as an institutional monopoly, that price ballooned up to seventy-four "riyals," tripling the cost of entering the country legally. "This is how an organization 'for the protection of immigrants' becomes, in fact, an organization for blackmail in the name of protection," protested 'Assaf, "how does [the Patronato Sirio-Libanése] dare call itself a benevolent organization when it refuses to obtain travel permissions for a man who does not pay to become a member?"<sup>582</sup> When Musa 'Azizi offered a response to 'Assaf, appealing that "our aims are to enrich the Syrian and Lebanese colony, not impoverish it", 'Assaf shot back with "what he ['Azizi] is doing is hoarding immigrant monies and enriching himself."<sup>583</sup>

In defending his organization, Musa 'Azizi availed himself of the themes of unity and national development, both ideas with capital for the colony's Arab nationalists. He also invoked

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<sup>579</sup> Referring to a strategy of governmentality and international diplomacy championed by Woodrow Wilson during World War I, the "chosen instrument" model involves a government's identification of a single private enterprise or client capable of enacting desired policies in a setting beyond that government's formal control. Wilson coined the phrase in 1915, although Emily Rosenberg argues it is a reiteration of Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy." Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 59-61.

<sup>580</sup> Jurj 'Assaf "Jam'iyyat al-Muhajira Tarhaq al-Sha'b," *al-Islah* 21 August 1928, 4.

<sup>581</sup> Likely francs, but the term "riyal" was used in the Syrian immigrant press generically to refer to Argentinian pesos, British pounds, or French francs. Jurj 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya," *al-Islah* 4 September 1928, 5-6.

<sup>582</sup> 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya," 5.

<sup>583</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya, 4" *al-Islah* 11 September 1928, 5.

the increasingly nativist tone in Argentinian politics as well as the threat of immigration restriction:

“Our principal action and purpose is to employ our funds to obtain, from the authorities [Poderes Publico], the repeal of any legal obstacles that create difficulties for our immigrants. We have achieved some of our proposed aims, and we hope that [with these achievements] our immigrant ancestors will be satisfied and rested.”<sup>584</sup>

The Patronato Sirio-Libanése’s sizable financial reserves (‘Azizi reported they were in excess of 100,000 Francs)<sup>585</sup> were absolutely needed in the interest of fighting immigration restrictions in court and protecting individual Syrian or Lebanese immigrants from possible imprisonment or deportation. Unconvinced by ‘Azizi’s argument for contingency planning, *al-Islah* Jurj Sawaya argued that “the Patronato says nothing of what kind of immigrants [it seeks to help], nor which difficulties [it will fight],” arguing that the specter of immigration restriction remained entirely ephemeral in Argentina, more scare-tactic than legal eventuality.<sup>586</sup>

Reporting on actual difficulties faced by Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to Argentina, Jurj ‘Assaf argued that unlike the United States, Argentina’s republican government had continued to endorse and even encouraged free immigration of Syrians.<sup>587</sup> The U.S.’s move towards quotas and immigration restriction with the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act did not presage new obstacles for Syrians arriving in Argentina. Indeed, ‘Assaf argues that Argentinian presidents Hipolito Irgoyen and Marcelo Torguato de Alvear had been receptive to Syrian appeals in the country, and even counted the Syrians among their constituents (both *al-Islah* editor Jurj Sawaya

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<sup>584</sup> ‘Azizi, as cited in Jurj Sawaya, “Una Denuncia Grave,” *al-Islah* 25 September 1928, 12.

<sup>585</sup> Jurj ‘Assaf, “‘Athma al-Jam‘iyya al-Suriyya al-Lubnaniyya li-Himayat al-Muhajira,” *al-Islah* 28 September 1928, 5.

<sup>586</sup> Sawaya, “Una Denuncia Grave,” *al-Islah* 25 September 1928, 12.

<sup>587</sup> By comparison, the United States began to limit Syrian immigration beginning in 1919. As a result, a clandestine migration pattern emerged whereby Syrians destined for the U.S. would arrive first in Mexico or Cuba, and then seek assistance in being smuggled across the border. See Teresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 53.

and Jurj 'Assaf himself were Irgoyen supporters). During his investigation of 'Azizi's claims, 'Assaf interviewed Yusuf Ghattas, an attorney who was in the process of filing claims against the Patronato Sirio-Libanése by immigrants who felt defrauded by the organization. Ghattas reported that "entry into Argentina has never before been simpler," concluding that "the obligation of a benevolent society is to disburse money to needy people, not to take money from them." Ghattas pointed to one of his clients, Nasib Antun Mikha'il, who reported that 'Azizi had told him his seventy-four "riyal" payment would go towards processing his papers and finding him work in textiles. Mikha'il did not discover for some time that the textile factory he was employed by at was one of 'Azizi's own, and that in effect (Ghattas charged) he had entered into a precarious position where he depended on 'Azizi for both his wages and his legal status.<sup>588</sup> Yes, there were serious obstacles facing Syrian and Lebanese immigrants to Argentina, *al-Islah* concluded of the matter:

"There is found on our backs a heavy burden... and the time has come to speak frankly about this heavy burden on our colony. [But] this burden does not emanate from the government of this [Argentinian] Republic, which has not excluded any Syrian from entry except for those... who are in some way degraded."<sup>589</sup>

According to *al-Islah*, the "burdens" facing new Syrian immigrants to Argentina-- migration restriction, institutional corruption, financial hardship— originated not with Argentinian attitudes about immigration but with the French Mandate, its Buenos Aires consulate, and its partners in the Patronato Sirio-Libanése. By assuming a semi-institutional role as the colony's gatekeeper, the Patronato's interests were not in protecting immigrants but in the preservation of a documentary regime that Jurj 'Assaf and his partisans saw as intrinsically illegitimate. Even worse, 'Assaf argued, was the ammunition that 'Azizi's organization might actually give to

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<sup>588</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya," *al-Islah* 4 September 1928, 5.

<sup>589</sup> 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhr al-Jaliyya," 5.

Argentinian nationalists. The new financial hardship behind the pursuit of papers might place some Syrian immigrants in poverty, bolstering nationalist complaints that the Syrian colony was a net burden on Argentina's economy.<sup>590</sup> Invoking the image of an impoverished, unemployed, and exploited Syrian immigrant fresh off the boat, 'Assaf implored Musa 'Azizi with an unsubtle amount of vitriol: "if your oversized funds are needed anywhere at all, it is in the streets of this local colony. Build a library or community center instead."<sup>591</sup>

At the same time, there were those within the French consular system who disliked Musa 'Azizi's Patronato Sirio-Libanése for a different set of reasons, particularly personal linkages between some of its board-members and the Syrian National Bloc in Damascus. Musa Busader's involvement was a particular problem; Busader had been sympathetic to 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar and the Syrian Palestinian Congress in the early 1920s. Although it was clear to Jurj 'Assaf, *al-Islah* newspaper, and the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya* that the Patronato Sirio-Libanése was profiting by France's increasingly restrictive documentary regime, Sofia Martos makes a compelling case that the French authorities in Buenos Aires often mistrusted the organization's loyalty and political affiliations. She points out that by 1930, the Buenos Aires Consulate wrote letters of complaint to the French Foreign Ministry in Paris, claiming that 'Azizi's organization was exploiting Syrian travelers by charging commissions on their sea passage tickets and extorting them upon arrival.<sup>592</sup> At the same time, Musa 'Azizi protested openly to the Argentinian press when the French Consulate interfered in his business in 1930.

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<sup>590</sup> 'Assaf, "Ma 'ala Zuhur al-Jaliyya," 5.

<sup>591</sup> Jurj 'Assaf, "'Azmat al-Jam'iyya al-Suriyya al-Lubnaniyya li-Himayat al-Muhajira," *al-Islah* 28 September 1928, 5.

<sup>592</sup> Martos' conclusion, that the enmity between the French Consulate and the Patronato had been constant since the Patronato's establishment in 1928, is reasonable given the reportage available from French Consular documents. The reports on this relationship in the Syrian press of Buenos Aires, however, reveal an initial partnership that eventually went south. "Le Consul De France a Buenos Aires a Monsieur Le Haut Commissaire De La Republique En Syrie Et Au Liban," in V. 616 (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatique: July 28 1930), 138-43, as cited by Martos, *The Balancing Act*, 259.

So what happened? How did the Patronato Sirio-Libanése go from a trusted French client in the *mahjar* in mid-1928 to an organization of questionable French loyalty in 1930? The answer to this questions lies in French dragoman Shukri Abi Sa'ab's translations of the local Syrian press for French officials; in summer 1929, he began to report on the community's growing outrage at Musa 'Azizi's Patronato, translating articles by Jurj 'Assaf and others.<sup>593</sup> Perhaps in these translations, Abi Sa'ab was arguing that if the French Consulate sought emigrant hearts and minds, the Patronato Sirio-Libanése had expended its usefulness as a French client. But his reports on the grumblings of his nemeses in the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar* appear to have succeeding in causing the French Consul to watch the Patronato very closely after 1929, with a concern for any francophobe statements made by its leaders. The relationship between the French Consul of Buenos Aires and the Patronato Sirio-Libanése, then, was less a partnership than a joint venture, born of a temporary confluence of interests more than actual political loyalty. As a result, it turned out to be as ephemeral as the France's alliance with the Syrian nationalists had been during World War I [see Chapter 2].

Meanwhile, Syrian and Lebanese travelers often found their ability to travel for tourism, work, or more permanent resettlement found such matters much more difficult, and spaces for effective protest more circumscribed. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the reactions of would-be travelers who were denied visas by the Mandate's Buenos Aires Consulate. In November 1928, one Lebanese traveler spurned by the state attempted to appeal to a higher authority. Butrus Kairuz, the son of Domingo Kairuz, a textile mogul in Buenos Aires, applied for a round-trip visa to visit family in Lebanon for a period of months before returning to

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<sup>593</sup> "Letter from French Embassy in Buenos Aires to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," in V. 411 (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatique, June 26 1929), v. 411, p. 212-14; "Traduction: Du "Journal Syrio-Libanais," Buenos Aires, Decembre 21 1929," in V. 616 (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatique: 1930), as cited by Martos, *The Balancing Act*, 258.

Argentina. His request was denied, leaving Kairuz stranded abroad. Relying on a pattern of petitioning already decades old (and one which the French at one point endorsed, see previous chapter), Kairuz wrote a letter of appeal to Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik in Bkerke. He protested his disagreeable treatment by the French Consulate in Buenos Aires, which he attributed to his family's political role in Lebanon's "war of Creation" [al-harb al-kawniyya, World War I]. The Kairuz family had been allied with Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani, a secular political party that opposed French tutelage in the Levant during the War [see Chapter 2]. To demonstrate that his grievance was not merely his own, Kairuz appended the signatures of several dozen Maronite leaders in Buenos Aires, as well as the official stamp of the *Jam'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Maruni*, an organization established by Huwayyik's Church for representative purposes just a few years earlier [see Chapter 3]. Kairuz explained that he had exhausted his opportunities for appeal to the French Consulate in Buenos Aires, which had complete power over visas for the community, and "having been unable to secure our own rights and liberties, we appeal to you, your Excellency, to prevail on the French Consulates to restore our rights to us."<sup>594</sup> Kairuz argued that the Mandate government's continuing discretion over matters of nationality, passports, and visas, was a problem to be combatted. He recommended bringing the matter to Yusuf Istafan, a member of Lebanon's parliament, in the name of Lebanon's emigrants summarily locked out of the country.

Butrus Kairuz's political background and perspectives varied immensely from those the Arab nationalists discussed elsewhere in this chapter: whatever the wartime predilections of his father, by the 1920s his was a pro-Mandate, Francophile aristocratic family with ties to the clergy and the local Maronite mission. Kairuz's protest against the Consulate's handling of the emigrant

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<sup>594</sup> Butrus Kairuz and *al-Ittihad al-Maruni* to Patriarch Ilyas Butrus Huwayyik, 26 November 1928 letter, Archives of the Maronite Patriarchate, Bkerke, Lebanon, Huwayyik Collection, Folder 89, Latin America, number 368.

visas issue and the Mandate's continuing control over matters that, he argued, should be Lebanese affairs reveals the extent to which Syrians and Lebanese living in Argentina saw the Mandate state as a hindrance to aspirations of self-determination. For Kairuz, being refused his right to return to his family home was an imposition of exile, thrust upon him by a foreign occupying power; his appeal to the Maronite Patriarch to rectify the problem was a strategy in creating leverage.

In the end, the increasing number of obstacles, regulations, and restrictions made Syrian and Lebanese migration to Argentina progressively more difficult, and did so by design. To travel from Beirut to Buenos Aires required that a traveler seek permission from the Mandatory government both before disembarkation and (after 1926) upon arrival. Once in Buenos Aires, the French Consulate required a registration process that involved a formal change in nationality, a requirement resented by Syrians and Lebanese who opposed the Mandate. This paperwork, furthermore, became expensive to obtain, and this was especially so after 1928 because the Consulate depended on the Patronato Sirio-Libanése. And once in Argentina, the Consul could deny Syrian and Lebanese immigrants a visa to return home, and the lack of formal oversight over this process created even greater resentment. Argentina's continuing leniency on Syrian immigration during a decade when other American nations were increasingly curtailing new immigration ensured that Syrians still made the trip, but the matter was now more onerous, expensive, and potentially exploitative than before, making migration one of the central topics of discussion among Arab nationalists in Argentina.

### *Conclusions*

By 1929, Argentina's Arab nationalist movement had changed significantly in terms of goals and prospects. Between World War I and 1929, Arab nationalist intellectuals like Amin Arslan, Jurj Sawaya, and Felipe Homad had gone from looking upon the international forum



(especially the League of Nations) as a space for the realization of Syria's right to self-determination, to looking at it with deep mistrust as just another manifestation of Western colonialism. France went from honorable collaborator in the Syrian-Arab independence project during World War I, to Syria's brutal colonial occupier, and as a result, Arab nationalist thinkers in Argentina increasingly looked to American models for an anticolonial liberation narrative. With the rise, in Syria, of the moderate nationalist Syrian National Bloc, a new disjuncture between Arab nationalist at home and those abroad surfaced. In Buenos Aires, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-'Arabiyya* condemned the movement's "honorable cooperation" with French authorities, and continually pushed for a Revolution that looked increasingly unlikely. And as the Mandatory government progressively cinched up its regulations pertaining to Syrian and Lebanese travelers and migrants living abroad, the Arab nationalists of Argentina found themselves less able to evade the expanding political reach of the Mandate, its consular network, and its clients within the Syrian-Lebanese colony.

That said, at least as many continuities as changes can be observed among Argentina's Arab nationalists between 1914 and 1929, and these continuities ultimately prove more significant in explaining movement from its leaders' perspectives. The movement's principle aim was for an independent Syrian federated state under constitutional rule, and this objective had remained constant since World War I. These Arab nationalists saw themselves as the ideological descendants of the Young Turk movement which had executed the Revolution of 1908. Some of them had themselves been "Young Turks": Amin Arslan, Ottoman Consul of Argentina, reported in his memoirs that he came to South America to reintroduce Syrians in *al-mahjar* to the new constitutional era.<sup>595</sup> During World War I, the Arab nationalist movement under Emir Faysal

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<sup>595</sup> Nuwayhid and Nuwayhid, *al-Amir Amin Arslan*, 37.

seemed the clearest descendent of this spirit of Ottoman constitutionalism, and the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-7 after that. The goal remained the same for Arab nationalists: political unity, complete independence, and constitutional government.

As the primary point of contact between the state and its emigrant populations, the Consulate remained, from 1914 to 1929, an important site for political contest, and it had been so since the end of the Ottoman period. During the Mandate, French consular officials kept tabs on Arab nationalist leaders and intellectuals, using their authority to issue (or deny) travel permissions and nationality documents as a means of political control. In the meantime, bureaucratic issues like the processing of visas became an increasingly complex and expensive affair, creating practical problems for Syrian travelers and generating new complaints about the Mandatory state. Despite the commonplace notion that it was American receiving states that attempted to place new restrictions on immigration during the 1920s, among the Arab nationalists in Buenos Aires it seemed clear that it was French, not Argentine, authorities that sought to limit Syrian mobility, dividing Syrian from its diaspora with an opaque documentary regime. The radicals of the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya*’s proclamations of Arab unity should be read with this facet in mind. Not only did Jurj Sawaya, Jurj ‘Assaf, and Amin Arslan declare their intention to represent “Arabs from every locale and every people, from Syria or Lebanon, or Palestine...from East Jordan and any other Arab lands that are presently under the foreign yoke”<sup>596</sup> on the basis of an ethnic solidarity based on being soldiers of the language of *qād*.<sup>597</sup> Such expressions of broad unity serve to upend the divisive logic of an internationally

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<sup>596</sup> “Hizb Istiqlal al-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya,” *al-Islah* 17 July 1928, 7.

<sup>597</sup> The reference to *lughat al-qād* (as a referent for an Arabophone political identity) was significant here because in a time when most nationalist parties were still making territorial or historicist claims upon a national identity or past, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* centered on the common language of all Arab peoples. The idea that all Arabic speakers shared a common past and a common struggle against foreign imperialism would become hegemonic in the years after WWII.

inspired imperialism that, through the mask of state-building placed new barriers between peoples, whether on the basis of religious affiliations or in this case, Syria and its *mahjar*.

## CHAPTER 5: SOUND MINDS IN SOUND BODIES: TRANSNATIONAL PHILANTHROPY AND PATRIOTIC MASCULINITY IN *AL-NADI AL-HOMSI* AND SYRIAN BRAZIL

On 2 May 1920, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* (Homs Club) opened its doors on *Rua 25 de Março* at the heart of São Paulo's Syrian neighborhood. Surrounded by textile merchants, ethnic grocers, and itinerant peddlers returning from the Brazilian interior, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* was a fraternity (*fityan*) for young men of a certain level of education, piety, and patriotism. The club provided a space for civilized leisure and refuge from the Syrian neighborhood's bustling commerce, and its members cultivated a careful respectability centered on the preservation of Syrian literary traditions, charitable work, and the training of the body through sport. At *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s opening celebration, Syrian intellectual and founder Jurj Atlas pronounced, "this *Nadi* is not a brotherhood but for the society (*mujtamā'*) which exists within it." He motioned to a series of



Figure 8: *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s Sitting Room, 1920. Portraits Include: Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah (center); Top from Left: Ibrahim Hourani, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, Yusuf Shahin. Bottom from Right: 'Abd al-Massih Haddad (1), Hanna Khabbaz (2), Rafiq Rizq Sallum (4), 'Isa As'ad (5). Source: *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 15.

portraits of prominent nationalist personalities from the city of Homs adorning the clubhouse's walls: 'Abd al-Massih Haddad, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, Orthodox Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah, and Shaykh Ibrahim al-Hourani.<sup>598</sup> Atlas continued, "fraternity is what happens when its brothers return to this

<sup>598</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, *al-Nadi al-Homsi: Haflat al-Tadshin wa-l-Yubil al-Fuddi: Musadarat bi-Fadhlaka Tarikhiyya* (São Paulo: Dār al-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr al-'Arabiyya, 1946), 15.

space that make it thus... you are all sons of *Madīnat al-Ḥarāra*,<sup>599</sup> and the eyes of its shaykhs look to you. Illuminate the winter of their lives with your youthful vigor, shining like rays of sun.”<sup>600</sup>

Within the halls of *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, young Syrian men worked out new definitions of patriotic masculinity during the 1920s and 1930s. Although the group was established by a group of prominent immigrants from the Homs, young men up to twenty-eight years old from Syria, Lebanon, or Palestine were welcome to join if they accepted the club's mission: the disciplining of body and mind, participation in a secular patriotic ethos stressing anti-colonial unity, and a devotion to philanthropy as the primary work of the nation.<sup>601</sup> Distinguishing itself from other village and town-based Syrian societies, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* promoted that the origin of its name was in the oft-repeated saying that “the Homsi is strong in tradition,” a notion that then prevailed among Syrians both at home and in the *mahjar*.<sup>602</sup> The fraternity saw its role as giving young men an Eastern cultural education, raising them into men with a strong national tradition.

Founded just weeks before the Battle of Maysalun extinguished Emir Faysal's Arab nationalist government in 1920, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* sat within a transnational constellation of clubs spanning the entire Syrian *mahjar*. Drawing on existing networks of philanthropy and

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<sup>599</sup> *Madīnat al-Ḥarāra* translates here loosely as “City of the Sun,” and references Homs' ancient past. The city was once a settlement devoted to *al-Gabal*, the sun deity. In the Roman Period, Apollo became the city's patron. Orthodox Homsis in Brazil frequently invoked images of fire, light, and heat in praise of Homs and its emigrants abroad. Jurj Atlas, “Shabibat Homs fi-l-Mahjar,” *al-Karma* October 1914, 266.

<sup>600</sup> Atlas, “al-Nadi al-Homsi,” *al-Kalimat al-Khalida: wa-hiya Majmu‘a ba‘d ma Nashr min-Khutub al-Marhum Jurj Atlas fi-Jaridat al-Ittihad al-‘Arabi wa-l-Zahrawi wa-Majallat al-Karma*, (São Paulo: Dar al-Tiba‘a wa-l-Nashr al-‘Arabiyya, 1930), 97, 99.

<sup>601</sup> Among Syrian immigrants to Brazil, Homs was one of the most significant cities of origin. This can be partially explained by the growing weaving industry under industrialists Nami and Basilios Jafet, who contracted significant numbers of weavers from Homs beginning in 1908. Antunius Jafet, *Na‘imi Jafet: Hayatuhu, Amaluhu, wa-Atharuhu* (São Paulo: Antunius Jafet s.p., 1934), 12. The preponderance of Homsis in São Paulo is also reflected in the number of mutual aid societies and organizations bearing the city's name by the 1920s: in addition to *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, there was *Homs al-Fatat* and *al-Jam‘iyyat al-Shabiba al-Homsiyya* (which also had chapters in Argentina and Chile). Zahle was probably the second largest point of origin for Syrians living in São Paulo.

<sup>602</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 14-16.

patronage, the fraternity initiated a program of cultural reform aimed squarely at remaking a patriotic Syrian manhood. The project that had its intellectual origins in Ottoman Syria's last constitutional period (1908-1913) and evolved with the changing realities of World War I, the rise (and fall) of Hashimite Arab nationalism, and the subsequent emergence of a bourgeois, anti-colonial Syrian patriotism. Through charitable work, moral training, intellectual self-improvement, and physical challenge, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* charged young men with taking the mantle of an enlightened Syrian manhood, rendered simultaneously in paternalist and patriotic terms. Using materials culled from *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s foundational library (established in 1923), from the personal libraries of the club's founders, and from Syria's diasporic press, this chapter outlines the fraternity's history during the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>603</sup> It argues that the fraternity's cultural mission, making Syrian men, was transnational in scope and that the political culture of the *mahjar* must be considered a part of Syria's interwar social history.

*Homs Reaches Behind the Sea: Orthodox Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah and Transnational Philanthropy*

Owing to a flourishing weaving industry, the city of Homs enjoyed an unprecedented period of growth in the early twentieth century. The various facets of Homs' textile industry— the investment of capital, production and shipping of bulk cloth, piecework and sale of ready-wear garments— linked the city to Syria's diaspora, reinforcing chain migration patterns, particularly among the Greek Orthodox and Syrian Protestants who comprised one-third of the Homs' population.<sup>604</sup> Sizable communities of Homsi emigrants selling textiles appeared across the

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<sup>603</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's first library opened on *Rua 25 de Março* in 1923. When the clubhouse moved in the 1940s, much of the original Arabic collection was donated to Harvard University among the personal papers of Syrian intellectuals. Two common practices common allowed me to track these materials. First, the stamps and inscriptions of *Maktabat al-Nadi al-Homsi* and persons who borrowed, bought, and donated the materials establish a visible chain of transfer. Second, because the Syrian emigrant press function on a mail-order subscription system, the mobility of texts can be traced through postage markers and the locations of subscribers.

<sup>604</sup> 'Isa As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, vol. 2 (Homs: Mutraniyyat Homs al-Urthudoxiyya, 1983), 36, 416-7.

Americas, but São Paulo (itself experiencing a boom in cloth production under Syrian-Lebanese cotton mogul Nami Jafet) served as Homs' port of entry into the *mahjar*.<sup>605</sup>

As a human network of weavers and cloth traders linked Homs to São Paulo, a remittance economy emerged, allowing for private investment into Syrian philanthropic societies, schools, and orphanages. The Orthodox Church in Homs took the lead in developing philanthropic infrastructure abroad, particularly under Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah and his colleague, the priest 'Isa As 'ad. Born in Shwayfat and educated in Suq al-Gharb (in present day Lebanon), Athanasius 'Atallah arrived in Homs in 1886 after a succession of clerical posts in Istanbul, Latakia, and Mar Ilyas.<sup>606</sup> A man of the *nahda*, Bishop 'Atallah firmly believed in the power of education (both religious and secular) to guarantee social and political progress. In Syria, he worked with the Ottoman *wakil al-madaris* to diversify the types of education available to Syrians, founding adult night schools and workers' education programs in Beirut, Tripoli, Damascus, and Mount Lebanon, dozens of secondary schools and charities in the 1890s, as well as a hospital in Homs, opened in 1912.<sup>607</sup>

Bishop 'Atallah built "national schools" at the tertiary level as well. The most well-known of these was the *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya*, established in Homs in 1901. Opened on the site of a former missionary school, 'Atallah rebuilt the college's curriculum employing the pedagogical ideas of Butrus al-Bustani, a nineteenth century reformer who blended the rigorous content of the missionary education with the believe that "education should inculcate in the

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<sup>605</sup> Clark Knowlton reports that of the 91 Syrian and Lebanese industrialists operating in Brazil, 73 were engaged in the textile industry, "The Social and Spatial Mobility of the Syrian and Lebanese Community in São Paulo, Brazil," in *Lebanese in the World*, 303; Antuniyus Jafet, *Dhikrayyat: Nisf Qarn 1904-1954* (São Paulo: Dar al-Tiba'a wa-l-Nashr al-'Arabiyya, 1957), 25-9.

<sup>606</sup> Athanasius 'Atallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs li-l-Rum al-Urthudhoks, 1888-1891*. Ed. Nihad Munir Sam'an (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2006), 15.

<sup>607</sup> 'Isa As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, vol. 2 (Homs: Mutraniyyat Homs al-Urthudoxiyya, 1983), 36. 'Atallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs*, 16.

minds [of its students]... the patriotic principle.”<sup>608</sup> Butrus Abu Manneh argues that al-Bustani’s mid-nineteenth century approach to a “national” curriculum had been a direct response to the influx of foreign missionaries in Syria; the multiplication of religious schools by foreign missionaries produced the province’s most educated generation among the Syrian Christians, but it had also fostered divisions between Christian denominations. National schools like *Kulliyyat Homs al-Wataniyya* sought a cross-confessional student body and a secular curriculum with shared patriotic content, to create unities and counter confessional divisions.<sup>609</sup> The school’s head (and Bishop ‘Atallah’s parter) was Hanna Khabbaz, from a prominent Protestant family in Homs. The *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya*’s first cohorts were primarily from Orthodox of Protestant backgrounds.<sup>610</sup> Many of them, furthermore, would become significant personalities in the *mahjar*. ‘Abd al-Massih Haddad taught there before moving to New York and founding the political daily *al-Sa’ih*.<sup>611</sup> Syrian writer Nazir Zaytun received a scholarship there, and after graduating in 1912, he moved to Brazil where he became one of the colony’s most important intellectuals.<sup>612</sup> The nationalist poet Husni Gharrab had entered Khabbaz’s school in 1909; he would transfer out to the American School in Tripoli, graduating in 1914 before leaving Syria just weeks before WWI.<sup>613</sup> Both Zaytun and Gharrab became founding members of the *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, further cementing the linkage between Homs, São Paulo, and the educational institutions they shared.

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<sup>608</sup> Butrus Abu Manneh, “The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: the Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, No. 3 (1980), 290.

<sup>609</sup> Abu Manneh, “The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism,” 291-4.

<sup>610</sup> ‘Atallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs*, 14-5.

<sup>611</sup> As‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 530.

<sup>612</sup> As‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 532. Zaytun later became editor for *Fatat Lubnan* in São Paulo.

<sup>613</sup> As‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 527.



The Bishop was an incredible builder of social institutions, much-needed in that late nineteenth century moment. Homs' population was simply exploding, increasing nearly five fold in between 1810 and 1889 (to 45,000).<sup>614</sup> The weaving industries in cotton and silk encouraged skilled workers to move there from Hama, Damascus, as well as from the rural hinterland. Along with these arrived foreign missionaries: the American Protestants in 1856, French Jesuits in 1882, Russians soon thereafter.<sup>615</sup> One-third of Homs' population was Christian, and the majority of that number Greek Orthodox;<sup>616</sup> the combined influx of new immigrants and competition with foreign missions informed the Greek Orthodox Church's enthusiastic building of schools, charities, orphanages, and other social infrastructure. The ambitious Bishop, furthermore, did not limit such projects to the city of Homs but extended them into Orthodox communities abroad: reaching out to partners in the *mahjar*, 'Atallah endowed the *Jam 'iyyat al-Shabiba al-Homsiyya*, a philanthropic organization with branches in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile between 1908 and 1909. By 1914, this organization boasted over twenty branches spanning across South America.<sup>617</sup>

In 1908, Bishop 'Atallah supported the Young Turk revolutionaries, and he swiftly refocused his efforts on building a network of constitutionalist patriotic clubs across Syria and its diaspora. In Homs, he endowed the *Jam 'iyyat al-Rabi'a al-Adabiyya*, a youth group led by 'Isa As 'ad with the mission to create an empowered male citizenry among the city's middle class.

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<sup>614</sup> As 'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 416-7.

<sup>615</sup> Na'im Salim al-Zahrabi, *Usur Homs wa 'Amakin al-'Ibadah: Darasah Watha'iqiyyah 1918-1940* (Homs: Dar Harmun, 1995), 198.

<sup>616</sup> As 'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 386.

<sup>617</sup> In 1914, this powerful network of Homs societies labored towards amassing an endowment for a hospital to be constructed in Homs. The hospital, *al-Mustashfa al-Watani*, was never constructed as the plans were interrupted by World War I. Although many of these societies continued to organize wartime relief, several branches closed during the war as well. In this light, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* was founded as a revival of an organization spirit temporarily dampened during the conflict. Jurj Atlas, "Shabibat Homs fi al-Mahjar," *al-Karma* October 1914, 269. The hospital project did eventually materialize, in 1927. Opened in the Hamidiyya district, it was called *Mustashfa Homs*, endowed primarily by donations from abroad. Salwa Atlas, "al-Mustashfa fi Homs," *al-Karma* January 1927, 60-1.

As‘ad described the *Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* as an organization rising to meet the need for a comprehensive cultural movement [*haraka shamila thiqafiyya*] towards the “spreading the spirit of the nation [*al-ruh al-qawmiyya*] among the various sons of this single Syrian nation [*al-watan al-wahid*].”<sup>618</sup> The organization was overwhelmingly Orthodox, and its president, As‘ad, a priest, but the society nonetheless insisted that its mission was nonsectarian and patriotic, about “homeland, national community, and nationality [*al-watan, al-umma, wa-l-jins*].”<sup>619</sup> The clubs which ‘Atallah and As‘ad helped establish in South America were modelled similarly to the *Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* of Homs. Neither priest ever visited Brazil, but as their network of Homs clubs expanded, ‘Atallah’s project of making Syrian men found expression within a transnational space between Homs and its emigrants abroad.

If the Bishop played an important role in constructing Syrian social infrastructure in the *mahjar*, Syrian social activists living abroad also influenced how these societies performed their work. In 1909, for instance, ‘Atallah’s patriotic club in Homs received a very special delivery from Sao Paulo: a printing press, donated by Syrian wholesaler Bishara Mahradaawi. The press was of the metal plate type, its plates aged after a couple decades of use; Mahradaawi said he had purchased the press from a defunct Syrian paper in Brazil, but that it had originally come from Cairo.<sup>620</sup> Mahradaawi’s printing press went to good use in Homs: the *Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* founded its own political weekly, called *Homs*, the first of its kind in the city.<sup>621</sup> *Homs* reported on political and social events in Syria and around the world, but focused especially on the patriotic clubs that linked Homs to its *mahjar*. During the twenties, it regularly reported on events at the

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<sup>618</sup> *Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, ‘*Amal Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* (Homs, Matba‘at al-Salamah, 1948), 2-3. It should be noted, however, that at this stage articulations of “Syrian” national identity were framed within and Ottoman context, not apart from it.

<sup>619</sup> Isa As‘ad, “Khitab al-‘Ulamah al-Khuri ‘Isa As‘ad,” ‘*Amal Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, 16.

<sup>620</sup> “Matba‘at Homs,” *Homs*, 13 June 1924, 8.

<sup>621</sup> As‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 417.

*Kulliyyat Homs al-Wataniyya*, the *Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, and *al-Nadi al-Homsi*. The serial even had a Sao Paulo correspondent, Daud Qostantine al-Khuri, who lived in Homs but who corresponded with *al-Nadi al-Homsi* regularly and reported on Syrian societies, charities, and sports clubs in South America.<sup>622</sup>

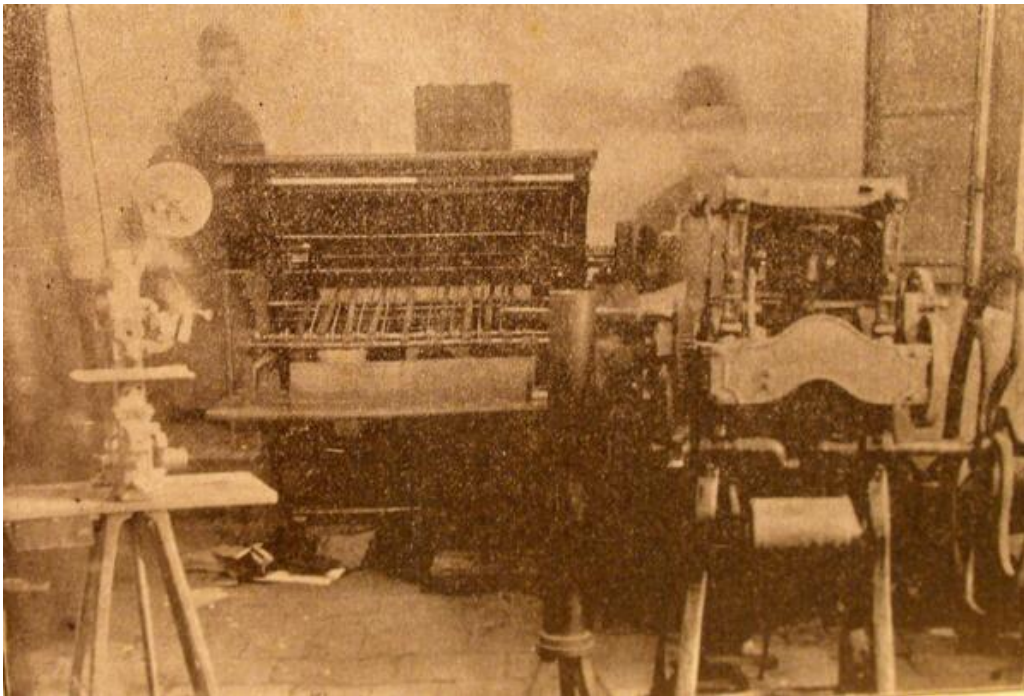


Figure 9: Image of Homs Press, unknown date. Source: “Matba‘at Homs,” *Homs*, 13 June 1924, 8.

With the beginning of World War I, ‘Atallah's patriotic clubs served important social and political functions. Each branch provided charitable assistance, education, and social services to Syrian emigrants, while also remitting donations to Homs. Simultaneously, they provided political support for the Syrian constitutionalist cause, first under the Ottoman banner (1908-1913), then under the Emir Faysal (1916-1920).<sup>623</sup> The War was a catastrophe for Homs, but an

<sup>622</sup> Daud Qostantin al-Khuri was actually elected president of *al-Nadi al-Homsi* in 1925, despite that he still lived in Syria at that point. Al-Khuri did ultimately relocate to São Paulo in 1926. As‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 417; al-Nadi al-Homsi, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 11.

<sup>623</sup> The Ottoman Constitution's 1908 restoration was widely celebrated across the Syrian *mahjar*. For details on a festival in Buenos Aires, see Hyland, “‘Arisen from Deep Slumber,’” 562.

enervating moment for Syrian activism in the *mahjar*. In 1915, Ottoman general Cemal Pasha occupied Syria and forced Homs' civilian government under *kaymakam* Amin al-Tamimi into exile. Bishop 'Atallah and 'Isa As'ad, watched helplessly as their schools and hospitals were requisitioned by Ottoman troops, and the *Jam'iyyat al-Rabi'a al-Adabiyya* banned and pushed underground.<sup>624</sup> As the mortal realities of military government, famine, and disease set in, 'Atallah and As'ad joined a clandestine branch of Emir Faysal's Arab Revolt, laying the groundwork for a general uprising in Homs upon the arrival of Hashimite Arab forces.<sup>625</sup> They encouraged Homsis around the world to do the same, and sought money, food aid, and military recruits from abroad.

Cemal Pasha's mass hanging of Syrian journalists and reformers on 6 May 1916 marked a major turning point in the war, fundamentally altering Syrian opinion on the Ottoman government both in *bilad al-sham* and its diaspora. 'Atallah's societies abroad sprang to action, funneling young emigrant men into the French infantry. Hafiz Khizam, a peddler living in São Paulo, was the first to join up; one of the Bishop's clandestine organizations, *Homs al-Fatat*, paid his passage across the Atlantic.<sup>626</sup> The following year Syrians from across South America joined the *Légion d'Orient*, a French-led irregular unit comprised of Syrian and Armenian emigrants seeking to liberate their homeland from Ottoman rule.<sup>627</sup> The short-lived alliance between the Syria's nationalist movement and the French Foreign Ministry would shake apart after 1918, but

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<sup>624</sup> As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 425-6.

<sup>625</sup> Both men joined *al-Fata al-'Arabi* in 1916. This party was Homs' local wing of Faysal's organization, *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-'Arabi*; Philip S. Khoury, "Factionalism Among Syrian Nationalists during the French Mandate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 4 (1981), 442.

<sup>626</sup> Hafiz Khizam al-Homsi, "Risalat al-Mutatawi' al-Suri al-Homsi fi-l-Jaysh al-Fransawi," *al-Sa'ih* 10 April 1916, 1; Khizam, "Fi-Sahat al-Qital," *al-Sa'ih* 20 July 1916, 1.

<sup>627</sup> Gildas Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amerique du Sud, 1918-1945* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2008), 141-4; Maria Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Identities in French Syria and Lebanon: a Transnational Dialogue with Arab Immigrants to Argentina and Brazil, 1915-1929* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007), 44-5.

during the war, the Syrians of Brazil provided a critical source of material support for the Allied Powers as they engaged Ottoman soldiers in the Levant.<sup>628</sup>

With the liberation of Homs on 2 October 1918, Emir Faysal appointed ‘Isa As ‘ad the official representative of the city's Orthodox Christians. With government support, Bishop ‘Atallah reopened the *Jam ‘iyyat al-Rabiʿa al-Adabiyya* as a mouthpiece for Homsī youth living at home and abroad.<sup>629</sup> Empowered by this turn of events, a new political culture grew up between Homs and its *mahjar* through the fraternities they shared. As Faysal spent 1919 shuttling between Damascus and Paris suing for Syria's complete independence (*al-istiqlāl al-tām*), Syrian intellectuals abroad set about defining their national community and its development. They equated the work of nation-building to the moral, intellectual, and physical development of Syrian men, their masculinity, and their placement at the head of a paternalist social order.<sup>630</sup> This vision wedded Syrian masculinity to desires for territorial liberation, cultural renewal, and parliamentary democracy. In June 1919, Faysal's party in Damascus, the *Jam ‘iyya al-Istiqlal al-Suriyya al-Markaziyya* drafted an appeal to “Syrian men of the world,” arguing that Syrians both at home and abroad ought cooperate in building a completely independent Syria “without tutelage” [*bila wisaya*]. The appeal, printed on flyers which appears in Syrian cities and in the press abroad, deployed the rhetoric of family and national duty in a call for unity against an imminent French occupation: “the will not be a nation of *madhhabs* or sects,” Faysal concluded in the broadside, “for is you are one of a faction of Syrians who is afraid of his

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<sup>628</sup> Simon Jackson, “Diaspora Politics and Developmental Empire: The Syro-Lebanese at the League of Nations,” *Arab Studies Journal* 21, no. 2 (2013), 171–4.

<sup>629</sup> As ‘ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 430.

<sup>630</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 66–8.

brothers,<sup>631</sup> let me say to you that it will be in our nation as it is in the family. You must not look at yourself as distinct from your country [*kawnak*], Arab Syria.”<sup>632</sup>

*al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s establishment in May 1920 came at the apogee of Emir Faysal's effort for a Syrian state under a Hashimite constitutional monarchy, and the club's patriotic outlook was intensely informed by visions of the Syrian nation as a family, with the attendant role for men as paternal providers. It was in many ways a response to challenges to Syria's capacity to rule itself then being made in the international community. At the same time, Faysal's rhetoric which combined familial nationalism with a plea for territorial sovereignty and international legitimacy was itself international. Images of male patriots, discussions about manhood, national duty, and the preservation of the nation circulated in the Arabic-language press, which had become a global force, and was a network heavily populated by Syrian emigrants. Much of the Arabic press's focus on young men, physical culture, and nationalism in 1919 derived from newspapers in Egypt, especially in *al-Ahram*, *al-Muqtataf*, and *al-Hilal*.<sup>633</sup> At that moment, Egypt roiled in popular revolution against the British imperial administration after the forced exile of Sa'ad Zaghlul, founder of *Hizb al-Wafd*. Before the War, the Egyptian anti-colonial movement was largely an elite affair. But like Syria, Egypt had suffered during the War, which brought discontent with the imperial government to the popular classes and the countryside. President Wilson's Fourteen Points received Egyptian support, and immediately after the November 1918 armistice, Zaghlul's

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<sup>631</sup> This clause was targeted against supporters of the *Grand Liban*, a Lebanese state separate from the greater Syrian territory.

<sup>632</sup> June 1919 *Jam 'iyya al-Istiqlal al-Suriyya al-Markaziyya* Appeal to the Syrian People, M.A.E., *E-Levant*, 1918-1940, *Syrie-Liban*. In Antoine Hokayem, Daad Bou Malhab Atallah, and Jean Charaf, *Documents Diplomatiques Français Relatifs à l'histoire du Liban et de la Syrie à l'époque du Mandat, Vol. 1: Le Démantèlement de l'Empire Ottoman et les Préludes du Mandat*. (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2003), 599-600.

<sup>633</sup> Wilson, *Workign Out Egypt*, 69-70. Wilson argues pointedly that although these papers had Syrian immigrant editorship, they were wholly *Egyptian* papers, with Egyptian readership and Egyptian relevance. This point is significant and underlines a certain multivalience to the Cairene newspapers which were also widely read by Syrians living the Americas.

*Wafd* made moves towards Egyptian self-determination and requested the removal of the British occupation.<sup>634</sup> After his exile in 1919, a series of mass demonstrations and widespread civil disobedience encouraged the British administration to do business with *Hizb al-Wafd*.<sup>635</sup> Whether in Cairo, in Syria, or across the *mahjar*, Syrians took notice of the 1919 Egyptian Revolution and described it as the model for successful engagement with the Powers.

Just six weeks after *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s opened its doors for the first time, however, the French utterly defeated Faysal's troops at the Battle of Maysalun in July 1920.<sup>636</sup> But rather than extinguishing the diaspora's nationalist aspirations, the Independence movement's suppression at home only stoked patriotic flames abroad. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* became an experiment in generating a patriotic male class that demonstrated intellectual, physical, and political sovereignty, with the utopian goal of returning to Syria to reignite the cause of Syrian unity and nationalism.

The image of the able-bodied male patriot as the ideal combatant of Western imperialism circulated the Syrian press at home, in Egypt, and in the American *mahjar* from 1919 through the 1930s.<sup>637</sup> Linked to larger ongoing discussions about social eugenics in the newspaper press, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s project had two broad goals. The fraternity focused first on Syrian children, particularly orphans, as potent symbols for the nation, its peril, and its future. *al-Nadi al-Homsi*

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634 Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: the Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 172.

635 Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, "The Revolution of 1919 and its Aftermath: the Apotheosis of Egyptian Nationalism," in *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: the Search for Egyptian Nationhood* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 48.

636 As'ad, *Tarikh Homs*, 434.

637 Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 65-8; these images were part of a larger familial nationalism that assigned complimentary roles to men and women. See Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 107-10; Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: the Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 168-72; Ellen Fleischmann, "The 'Woman Question' in Palestine and the Debate in the Arabic Press," *The Nation and its 'New' Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 63-91.

and its members built orphanages in both São Paulo and Homs, devoting volunteers and services to raising children who had lost their parents during World War I and the 1920 war of French occupation. Provisioning for orphans became a nationalist duty for Syrian men specifically. Not only did it restore hope for Syria's future by saving a generation of children poorly served by colonialism, mentoring Syrian orphans also provided the *Nadi*'s young men with moral training and preparation for their future roles as fathers of the nation.

The *Nadi* was similarly investing in making Syrian men through a rigorous program of moral, intellectual, and physical self-improvement. The fraternity stressed a holistic balance between an active intellectual life, moral health, and corporeal discipline through sports. Each of these faculties would produce the modern Syrian male, which the fraternity believed presaged Syria's political independence. To this end, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* built a library for the colony, held lectures, poetry readings, and theatrical performances which all nurtured Syrian ethnic identity and offered an anti-colonial reading of events back home. At the same time, the club supported physical education and maintained a masculine physical culture which drew analogies between strong bodies and national self-determination.

In order to found a patriotic fraternity in a Syrian colony he had never seen, Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah required local contacts. He found them in two Homsi emigrants of very different backgrounds: Bishara Mahradowi and Jurj Atlas. The same Orthodox wholesaler who had sent home the printing press in 1909, Bishara Mahradowi had moved to São Paulo at the turn of the century, where he struck success as an importer. In his store on *Rua 25 de Março*, he sold silk and cotton textiles, sewing notions, and ready-wear clothing; on the side, he extended credit



to new Syrian immigrants.<sup>638</sup> Jurj Atlas, by contrasted, ended up in Brazil quite by accident. The son of Mikha'il Sam'an Atlas, a Protestant convert who had assisted Ahmad al-Shidyaq in translating the Bible into Arabic in the 1850s, Jurj Atlas had received an American missionary education which took him from Homs to Suq al-Gharb, Tanta, and finally to Oxford, where he attended university.<sup>639</sup> Atlas worked briefly in London before returning to Homs to marry and strike out a path as a journalist. In 1914, he married Salwa Salameh Atlas; the couple was in Brazil on honeymoon when World War I began. Unable to return home, they permanently resettled in São Paulo and integrated themselves into the colony's social elite. They established *al-Karma*, a literary magazine which included translations of European philosophers, discussions of Syrian politics, church news, and topics in pedagogy, science, and medicine. The magazine later served as *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s official organ.<sup>640</sup>

In his spare time, Jurj organized politically with *Homs al-Fatat*.<sup>641</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s clearest predecessor, *Homs al-Fatat* was a political fraternity for young men in São Paulo which advocated revolutionary action against the Ottoman state.<sup>642</sup> Atlas combined his interests in youth education with his knack for political activism as *Homs al-Fatat*'s mentor. When in 1916 Atlas learned that an acquaintance of his from home, the Ottoman parliamentarian 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, had been among those martyred by Cemal Pasha, Jurj responded by founding a political magazine called *al-Zahrawi* which carried the tagline "independence or death."<sup>643</sup> He

<sup>638</sup> Backcover ad for *Mahal Mahradawi*, "Ma'rid al-Muda wa-l-Azya' al-Haditha," *al-Karma* January 1927.

<sup>639</sup> Na'im Salim al-Zahrawi, *al-'Usr Homs wa-'Amakin wa-l-'Ibada: Dirasa Watha'iqiyya, 1840-1918* (Homs: Dar Harmun, 1995), 198.

<sup>640</sup> Jurj Atlas, "Ana," *al-Kalimat al-Khalida*, 16.

<sup>641</sup> Jurj Atlas, "Falsafa al-Haqiqa wa-l-Khiyal," *al-Kalimat al-Khalida*, 17.

<sup>642</sup> Jurj Atlas, "Shabibat Homs fi-l-Mahjar," *al-Karma* December 1914, 265.

<sup>643</sup> Faris Najm, "al-Sihafa al-Suriyya fi-l-Barazil: min-Jam'iyyat al-Sihafa al-Baraziliyya," *al-Karma* March 1922, 91. According to Atlas' memoirs, he also published a second title called *al-Ittihad al-'Arabi* which carried the same tagline (it is possible that the two publications were one and the same; neither had been independently located). Atlas, "Falsafa al-Haqiqa wa-l-Khiyal," *al-Kalimat al-Khalida*, 18.

called for Syrians to “break the Turkish yoke” by joining the *Légion d’Orient* and rising in revolt, and together with Najib Trad, Jurj Atlas helped funnel young Syrian recruits to Argentina to join the forces of the Entente.<sup>644</sup> Atlas supported the Hashimite Arab Revolt of 1916, and after the War's end, the Arab nationalist government which emerged under Emir Faysal.<sup>645</sup> This activist resume made Atlas Bishop ‘Atallah's ideal partner for his postwar project: to establish a Syrian fraternity in Brazil, built on the *Jam ‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*'s model which would promote an Arab nationalist perspective among Syrian youths. From Homs, Bishop ‘Atallah sent a sizable donation to Brazil, which was matched by Bishara Mahradaawi and fundraising from the Homs community in São Paulo. Jurj Atlas leased a clubhouse on Rua 25 de Marzo and was charged with developing a mission and overseeing recruitment.<sup>646</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homs*i opened its doors in May 1920, just as King Faysal's independent Syria looked its most hopeful.

At *al-Nadi al-Homs*i's inaugural meeting, Jurj Atlas sat in the clubhouse's foyer and outlined the fraternity's agenda. Its executive board was populated with Orthodox and Protestant Homs immigrants: Tawfiq Bunduqi, Shakib Jarrab, Daud Shakkur, Husni Gharrab, and Nazir Zaytun, among others.<sup>647</sup> Most of these young men had been members of *Homs al-Fatat*; others had been meeting at a cafe next to Mahradaawi's store locally famous for poetry readings and raucous political debate.<sup>648</sup> A full membership roster for this early period does not exist, but the names of 78 young men were recorded as present at the May 1920 meeting that established the

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<sup>644</sup> The friendship between Trad and Atlas was at least a couple of years old by the time the pair collaborated on in the recruitment drive. In his memoirs, Atlas describes inviting Trad to visit *Homs al-Fatat* to deliver a talk about the Ottoman Empire at War in late 1914. Trad reportedly encouraged Atlas's partisans to “break the Turkish yoke” over their backs. Trad was then editor of the Buenos Aires political daily, *al-Jadid*. Atlas, “Falsafa al-Haqiqa wa-l-Khiyal,” 21.

<sup>645</sup> Maria Narbona, *The Development of Nationalist Identities*, 94-5, 105.

<sup>646</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, 7.

<sup>647</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, 10-11.

<sup>648</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, *al-Nadi al-Homs*i, 11.

club; by the 1930s, fraternity boasted an estimated 730 regular members and attendants.<sup>649</sup> At this meeting, Atlas described the fraternity as a deeply historical social experiment, dating back to the roots of freemasonry in the English tradition. He credited the European Enlightenment and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lebanese *nahda* to networks of educated gentlemen spanning across oceans. These men congregated in cafes, meeting halls, and taverns, and there they gave Western civilization its leading edge: secular education, constitutionalism, and the polite masculinity of an empowered citizenry. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* was to recreate this power by combining the best of Syria's cultural, social, and political traditions into a new complete package to be remitted to the homeland, ending its imperial despair.<sup>650</sup>

*al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s clubhouse provided a social setting not only for the fraternity itself, but for the Syrian community in Brazil. The fraternity encouraged stewardship over the colony's social rhythms as a matter of paternalist duty, and it hosted social occasions (especially those associated with life milestones) with a great deal of ceremony. The club encouraged interaction between Syrians of varied religious backgrounds, sponsoring plays, concerts, poetry readings, and social mixers designed to foment discussions about secularism, patriotism, and literature. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* believed that sanctioned social mixing between young Christian, Muslim, and Druze youths was a critical part of its mandate; the fraternity similarly believed that Syrians in the *mahjar* had a greater opportunity to transgress older social boundaries than their brothers at home. Coed events were also common; *al-Nadi al-Homsi* hosted chaperoned receptions for young singles. In overseeing courtship, the club's founders hoped to end the practice of Syrian

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<sup>649</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 108-10; 150. Even with such modest numbers in the beginning, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* events drew a crowd. A public lecture given there by Hanna Khabbaz in 1922 reportedly brought over 1,000 Syrians from across South America to *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s clubhouse.

<sup>650</sup> Atlas, "al-Nadi al-Homsi," *al-Kalimat al-Khalida*, 98-9.

men returning to Homs for a bride, a practice that many in the *mahjar* saw as outmoded and problematic.<sup>651</sup>

The *Nadi*'s most frequent gatherings in its early years were less joyous, however; the clubhouse was often used as an improvised funeral home. Syrian immigration to Brazil began in the 1880s; as the *mahjar*'s second generation came of age, their parents had aged significantly.<sup>652</sup> Providing this generation's final services carried symbolic weight marking the rise of the new generation. Through these ceremonies, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* shaped the colony's collective memory while officiating over its communal affairs. In eulogies offered by *Nadi* members, the memory of the deceased was often celebrated as patriotic example of a life well-lived. In 1922, for example, Syrian writer Farah Antun passed away in Egypt after a heart attack. Antun had never visited Brazil, although his writings were much enjoyed by the Brazilian Arabic press, particularly Na'um Labaki's *al-Munāẓir*.<sup>653</sup> Antun's own experience in the American *mahjar* was a stint in New York City between 1899 and 1909 as the editor of the literary magazine *al-Jami'a*. After the serial folded in 1906, Antun left America, ultimately settling in Alexandria where he contributed to Cairo's *al-Ahram* and became an important public intellectual.<sup>654</sup> Antun's first love was theater, and he wrote plays like *Sultan Saladin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, where he engaged reformist themes and championed an Eastern cultural identity conversant with (but not subservient to) Western-style modernity.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> al-Nadi al-Homsi, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 8-10, 15.

<sup>652</sup> Shukri al-Khuri, "Sijil al-Asbaqiyya: Awa'il Tarikhiyya li-l-Hijrat al-Lubnaniyya fi al-Barazil," *Abu al-Hawl* (s.d. 1924), 3-5.

<sup>653</sup> Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 51-4.

<sup>654</sup> Henry Melki, *al-Sihafa fi-l-Mahjar wa-'Alaqatuha li-l-Adab al-Mahjari* (Dar Assalam: Dar al-Sharq al-Awsat li-l-Tib'a wa-l-Nashr, 1998), 97-99.

<sup>655</sup> Donald M. Reid, "The Syrian Christians and Early Socialism in the Arab World," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 2 (1974), 180-1, 183.

The brothers at *al-Nadi al-Homsī* saw their group as putting Antun's philosophies into practice, and on 28 October 1922, they put together a day of speeches and poetry recitation in Farah Antun's memory.<sup>656</sup> Khalil Sa'adih, founder of the pan-Syrian *Hizb al-Watani al-Suri* and Farah Antun's former colleague at Beirut's Syrian Protestant College, gave the eulogy.<sup>657</sup> Sa'adih described Antun as the Eastern Man par excellence, who in ceaseless intellectual pursuit (*quwwat al-tafkīr*) struggled against darkness, tyranny, and religious extremism. He was a part of an "intellectual revolution," (*thawra fikriyya*) that would bring Syria "into the light, and from the light to the Sun" (*ilā al-nūr wa-min al-nūr ilā al-ḥarāra*).<sup>658</sup> Sa'adih painted a Manichean image of the Syrian world divided between the forces of light and darkness; his congregants in *al-Nadi al-Homsī* represented a force for enlightenment and the "union of all Eastern peoples" who stood opposite the dark forces of ignorance and oppression under the "Western yoke" (*nīr al-gharb*).<sup>659</sup>

Sa'adih placed Farah Antun's memory among those other "martyrs of the pen" (*shuhadā' al-āqlam*) from nineteenth century *nahda*: Ibrahim al-Yaziji, Shibli Shumayyil, and Jirji Zaydan, as well as those "martyrs of the nation" (*shuhadā' al-watan*) executed during World War I.<sup>660</sup> He pressed *al-Nadi al-Homsī* to follow the examples of great men "those who burn themselves up to light the way for the nation," equating the fraternity's quest for knowledge with the nationalist political pursuit.<sup>661</sup> He closed the eulogy with a challenge, directed at the four hundred men and

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<sup>656</sup> Antun's memorial was the first of many such commemorative events. *Al-Nadi al-Homsī* later hosted funeral services for Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah, Jurj Atlas, Daud Qostantin al-Khuri, who each played a role in the club's creation. The fraternity also held events to commemorate the late Suleiman al-Bustani and Jurban Khalil Jubran, in 1925 and 1931, respectively. Dr. Philip Hitti, visiting Brazil from the United States, gave the eulogy at Suleiman al-Bustani's memorial. *Al-Nadi al-Homsī*, *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, 121-3, 128, 141; 'Atallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs*, 16.

<sup>657</sup> Khalil Sa'adih is best known in relation to his son, Antun Sa'adih, who founded the *Hizb al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i al-Suri* in 1932. See Christoph Schumann, "Nationalism, Diaspora, and 'Civilizational Mission': the Case of Syrian Nationalism in Latin America between WWI and WWII," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 4 (2004), 599-617.

<sup>658</sup> Khalil Sa'adih, "Khutba fi-Ta'bin Farah Antun," *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, 112-3.

<sup>659</sup> Sa'adih, "Khutba," *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, 116.

<sup>660</sup> Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 71.

<sup>661</sup> Sa'adih, "Khutba," *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, 119.

youths present that day: “if there remains any strength in the conquerors of Syria, let it be for this holy obligation. Who in the São Paulo colony will shout out like roaring thunder? Who will make the needed sacrifice to fulfill his patriotic prophecy, for something much greater than himself, for the cause of his fellow citizen (*muwāṭinihi*)?”<sup>662</sup> Sa‘adih’s “holy obligation” referred to the Syrian colony’s responsibility to develop their community, society, and nation; to his mind, the most beneficial way to do this was through the *mahjar*’s fraternities, which he linked to enlightenment ideas and secular political progress.<sup>663</sup> Sa‘adih invoked both the masculinity and piety of his audience: Farah Antun was the Eastern Man, and his manliness was as important as his Eastern identity.

Holding funerals at *al-Nadi al-Homsī* was important for several reasons. First, such services gathered São Paulo’s Syrian community in a new public space to celebrate and distill meaning from the lives of its cultural icons. Sa‘adih’s eulogy demonstrates that patriotism, liberation, and the *nahda*’s revivalist spirit provided recognizable signposts rooted in unity, secularism, and an authentic Syrian modernity. Similarly, at these events speakers sketched out the masculine ideal centered on cosmopolitan worldliness, a reverence for Syrian literary culture, and a project to enlighten the Syrian people, characteristics that *al-Nadi al-Homsī* tied to political liberation. Finally, such events cemented the club’s place at the center of the colony’s social life. By leading the community in grief, the *Nadi* also accepted the mantle of social leadership.

Through the provision of meaningful social services, *al-Nadi al-Homsī* rooted itself firmly within a transnational community of Syrians. The fraternity’s members saw themselves as agents of modernizing social change within a patriotic milieu. At the same time, the *Nadi* also

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<sup>662</sup> Sa‘adih, “*Khuṭba*,” *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, 119.

<sup>663</sup> ‘Ali Hamiya, *al-‘Ulama wa-l-Duktur Khalil Sa‘adeh* (Beirut: al-Furat li-l-Nashr, 2007), 170.

viewed young men as objects for social reform, and the club's fellowship was built on a rigorous schedule of philanthropy, intellectual cultivation, and corporeal discipline through sport. The image of Syrian men as self-possessed, sovereign, and strong patriarchs depended on their training early in life; the *Nadi* saw this training as the most important part of its work in Brazil.

*Charity and Children: al-Nadi al-Homsi's Orphanages and Ihsan as Patriotic Duty*

Philanthropy comprised *al-Nadi al-Homsi's* first pillar. As stewards to the community, members donated resources and time to maintaining the clubhouse, volunteering at *Nadi* events, and providing gifts to the poor. This work was in many ways a continuation of larger Middle Eastern social processes. In *Managing Egypt's Poor*, for example, Mine Ener argued that the Egyptian state's nineteenth century retreat from poor provisioning produced a “philanthropy gap,” which prompted Arab elites to create private charities and mutual aid societies. By the 1920s, these charities served the Egyptian nationalist movement with space for “managing” poverty, often while competing with the colonial administration over who was best suited to care for Egypt's poor.<sup>664</sup> A “politics of benevolence” appeared, creating hierarchies of worthiness and bringing new focus to ameliorating the suffering of the nation's most vulnerable members.<sup>665</sup> Ener illustrates this most clearly when discussing the 1919 Revolution, which she argues brought new emphasis to the plight of impoverished children as the symbols of an emerging Egyptian nation.<sup>666</sup>

With its private endowment, connection to an emerging Syrian bourgeoisie, and its preoccupation with youth development, the *al-Nadi al-Homsi* resembled Ener's philanthropic societies in Cairo. Furthermore, this club operated on the principles of mutual aid, collective

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<sup>664</sup> Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 22-3.

<sup>665</sup> Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 99-100.

<sup>666</sup> Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 24.

decision-making, and good works done in the name of *ihsan* (benevolence).<sup>667</sup> It appealed to a transnational Syrian public with the languages of honor and patriotic duty to encourage young men to participate, placing such obligations within a “discourse of responsibility and shame” cast increasingly in secular terms. And in the early 1920s, the *Nadi* placed a special emphasis on caregiving for the colony's most worthy poor: young Syrian orphans who populated the darker corners of the Syrian diaspora. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* helped found two large orphanages; the first, called *Dar al-ʿAytam al-Suriyya*, opened in São Paulo in 1923. The second, *al-Maytam al-ʿUrthudhoksi*, opened in Homs the following year. Although each orphanage operated within local sets of context that were in many ways distinct, they shared a common mission that transformed Syrian children (and especially boys) into objects of national reform, casting them as the future liberators of French-occupied Syria.

In São Paulo, the *Dar al-ʿAytam al-Suriyya*'s creation resolved some practical issues regarding the provision of social welfare in the Syrian community. Most of the Syrians living of São Paulo lacked Brazilian citizenship and had limited access to Brazilian public educational, medical, or welfare services.<sup>668</sup> Typically, Syrian immigrants tightly clustered in neighborhoods like that on *Rua 25 de Março*, where they founded their own schools, hospitals, banks, and philanthropic institutions.<sup>669</sup> Such a situation offered opportunities to the *mahjar*'s rising elite to build up the community's social infrastructure and ultimately promoted ongoing networks of philanthropy between the *mahjar* and its homeland. Indeed, philanthropic assistance flowed in all

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<sup>667</sup> Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 1-3, 107, 111; al-Nadi al-Homsi, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 13.

<sup>668</sup> Knowlton, *Lebanese in the World*, 304-6.

<sup>669</sup> Knowlton, *Lebanese in the World*, 299-301.



directions across this transnational space: Khalil Sa'adih and Salwa Salameh Atlas opened Syrian primary schools in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile while simultaneously raising funds for a new hospital in Homs, for example.<sup>670</sup> When the Brazilian government refused to admit a destitute Syrian child into São Paulo's municipal orphanage, the Syrians community relied instead on its own philanthropic networks, collecting donations for a private orphanage from



Figure 10: Boys play at the *Dar al-Aytam al-Suriyya*'s dormitory in São Paulo, c. 1930. Source: Taufik Kurban, *Os Syrios e Libanezes no Brasil* (São Paulo: Sociedade Impressora Paulista, 1933), 52.

Syrians living in Argentina, Chile, the United States, as well as Beirut, Hasbaya, Zahle, and Homs.<sup>671</sup>

The largest source of funding for the São Paulo orphanage came not from the *mahjar* but from the homeland: Orthodox

Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah provided the *Dar al-'Aytam al-Suriyya*'s original endowment, entrusting it to local businessman Bishara Mahradaawi, who served as the orphanage's resident director.<sup>672</sup> Be that as it may, the orphanage's budget was extremely limited, and the institution depended on around-the-clock volunteer labor. To this end, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* dedicated manpower to the initiative. Relying on a Syrian discourse of self-assistance, communal

<sup>670</sup> Sa'adih opened *al-Madrassa al-Suriyya* in Buenos Aires in 1915, "Hafla Khariji al-Madrassa al-Suriyya," *al-Majalla* 13, no. 13 (December 1915), 377; Salwa Atlas opened a similar school in São Paulo in 1914, Jurj Atlas, "Haflat Tadshin al-Karma," *al-Karma* July 1914, 90-1; Salwa Salameh Atlas, "al-Mustashfa fi-Homs," *al-Karma* January 1927, 20.

<sup>671</sup> Nazir Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya: al-Maytam al-Suri fi-San Bawlu fi-Mahrajanihi al-Dhahabi* (Damascus: Matabi' ibn Zaydun, 1958), 6.

<sup>672</sup> 'Atallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs*, 145.

responsibility, and good works as a patriotic virtue (references to honor which “made the colony's heart leap from its chest” according to member Nazir Zaytun), *al-Nadi al-Homsī* called on local Syrians to donate their time in the name of the homeland, honor, and *ihsan*. A corps of Syrian volunteers built the boarding house on some farmland that Mahradaḡi had purchased. Nazir Zaytun, present at the construction site, recalled, “the people were amazed at their self-realization; was all of this great work from their own hands?”<sup>673</sup> Five children moved in, and they were provided with safe lodging, good food, and a secular education. Jurj Atlas' wife, Salwa, provided lessons, and *al-Nadi al-Homsī* provided grounds-keeping, cooking, tutoring, and physical education.

The Brazilian *Dar al- 'Aytam* proved a success, and in 1926 Mahradaḡi enlarged the structure to incorporate full-size classrooms and a recreational yard for its growing population.<sup>674</sup> A day school operated in conjunction with the boarding house, and residents attended classes in Arabic and Portuguese languages, writing, recitation, mathematics, and the sciences with Syrian children from the neighborhood, all free of charge. Students also took classes in Arabic poetry (*qasa' id*), music, and nationalist history and sciences (*al-qawmiyyat*). Beyond the classroom, resident children had daily chores and were expected to help out with cooking, cleaning, and tending to the local Orthodox Church during its services.<sup>675</sup> When these duties were completed, visitors from *al-Nadi al-Homsī* provided extracurriculars: a sports program, guided poetry readings, and a theater club. The children reenacted the classics as well as patriotic plays directed by playwright and *al-Nadi al-Homsī* member Daud Qostantine al-Khuri. The children

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<sup>673</sup> Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, 7.

<sup>674</sup> Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, 30.

<sup>675</sup> Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, 45.

occasionally presented al-Khuri's originals, the most popular of which featured the wily Karagöz, a character borrowed from Syrian shadow puppetry.<sup>676</sup>

Although *al-Nadi al-Homsi* provided the *Dar al-'Aytam*'s volunteer workforce, in many ways the orphanage remained a transnational project with ties running across the *mahjar*. Bishara Mahradaawi made regular visits to Homs, Beirut, Hasbaya, and Zahle seeking donations for the orphanage, and as the 1920s wore on he solicited from not only Orthodox and Protestant donors but also from Maronites, another community with numerous emigrants in Brazil.<sup>677</sup> Similarly, the *Jam 'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* of Homs sent annual payments to Brazil for the building's upkeep.<sup>678</sup> Meanwhile, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* drew up plans for their second orphanage to be built in Homs, *al-Maytam al-'Urthudhoksi*. They submitted building blueprints, curricular information, and a small collection of books printed in São Paulo to 'Isa As'ad in Homs. As'ad coordinated with the *Jam 'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* of Homs to build the second orphanage, *Dar al-Aytam al-Suri*'s twin, in Homs' Hamidiyya district. It opened its doors on 25 March 1924, a date selected in commemoration to the donors living on *Rua 25 de Março*.<sup>679</sup>

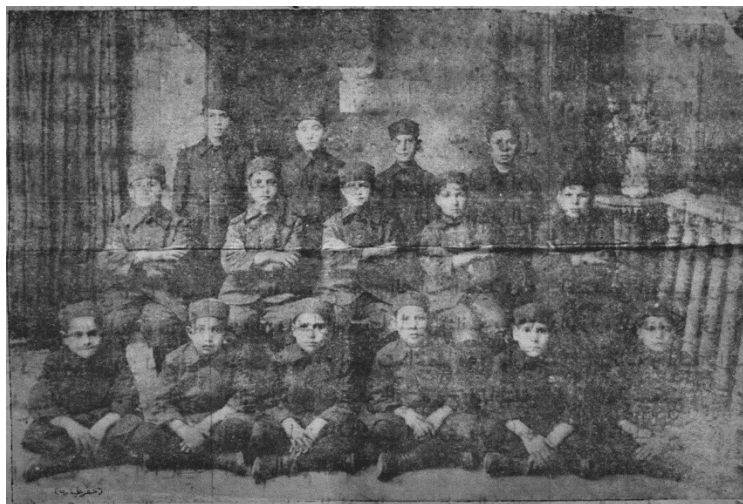


Figure 11: al-Maytam al-Urthudhoksi Residents, Homs, Syria, June 1924. Source: 'Isa As'ad, "al-'Aytam," *Homs*, 14 June 1924, 5.

<sup>676</sup> 'Isa Fattuh, "Daud Qostantine al-Khuri, Mu'allifan, Masrahiyyan, wa-Fananan," *Shumu 'fi-l-Dabab: Diraasa fi-Hayat wa-'Amal Nukhba min-A'lam al-'Adab al-Hadith fi-Suriyya wa-l-Mahjar* (Beirut: al-Manāra, 1992), 15-6; Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, 45-6.

<sup>677</sup> Zaytun, *Fi-Dhurwat al-Wataniyya wa-l-Insaniyya*, 30.

<sup>678</sup> 'Isa As'ad, "al-'Aytam," *Homs* 14 June 1924, 1.

<sup>679</sup> 25 March was an auspicious day in Brazilian history, marking the anniversary of Brazil's federation and 1824 Constitution. Syrian nationalists in São Paulo celebrated "Constitution Day" and openly drew analogies between Brazil's colonial past and Syria's imperial present; *Jam 'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, *'Amal Jam 'iyyat al-Rabita al-*

Homs' *al-Maytam al-'Urthudhoksi* took in fifteen boys in 1924, expanding to twenty-five the following year.<sup>680</sup> Most of these boys lost their families during the instability of World War I and the short-lived Faysal Period, a "string of disasters" that *al-Nadi al-Homsi* member Daud Qostantine al-Khuri said "left their sad effects, one of which is the orphans remaining in the land, whose number is not small and who have no home."<sup>681</sup> Orphaned by war, famine, and foreign occupation, these orphans were living symbols of Syria's political situation. As both a priest and a nationalist, 'Isa As'ad sought to not only save the children from a life of idleness, crime, and privation; by raising them into competent men and patriots, he reckoned the *Maytam* could liberate Syrian society as a whole. In *Homs* newspaper, As'ad explained that a people "cannot be free when (they are) afflicted by illness, ignorance, orphaned, or until they are liberated from their sins. The way to beneficence is difficult, as is that of society's betterment."<sup>682</sup> As vulnerable symbols of a nation under threat, As'ad argued that children were most worthy of charity, "a child has a heart that beats and a brain that thinks, but neither grows without sustenance. Neither develops without nurturing."<sup>683</sup> As'ad framed the *Maytam's* work in a pious and patriotic light, and he emphasized the ways that assisting Homs' lost children served elite Syrians with a way to atone for both personal sins and a lost vision of the nation. Volunteering at the *Maytam*, or donating resources in its name, would help Syria heal. As for the boys, they were to learn patriotic values, receive vocational training, and gain access to the fellowship of the *Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*. For As'ad, Homs' orphans had already made greater sacrifices than most

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*Adabiyya wa-Maytamiha al-Urthudoksiyya fi-Homs* (Homs: Matba'at al-Salama, 1948), 3.

<sup>680</sup> Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya, *'Amal Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, 4.

<sup>681</sup> Daud Qostantine al-Khuri, "Ila Kul Homsi," *Homs* 17 March 1923, 1-2.

<sup>682</sup> Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya, *'Amal Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, 4.

<sup>683</sup> As'ad, "al-'Aytam," *Homs*, 14 July 1924, 2.

for the Syrian national movement; with training and beneficence, he promised “they will also, God willing, be this nation's future.”<sup>684</sup>

Meanwhile, in Brazil the *al-Nadi al-Homsi* labored to sustain both orphanages through fund-raising, volunteering, and material donations. Its members in Brazil maintained a lively public correspondence with the *Jam ‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* in Homs on the aims and merits of Syrian philanthropy; this discussion was published in *Homs* newspaper for consumption by a transnational reading public. Playwright, *Homs* columnist, and *Jam ‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya* member Daud Qostantine al-Khuri wrote to *al-Nadi al-Homsi* so frequently that he was dubbed an honorary member in 1924 and elected *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's president in 1925, a year before he actually emigrated to Brazil.<sup>685</sup> After his relocation, al-Khuri continued to submit monthly letters to *Homs* newspaper, eliciting discussions about piety, patriotism, and philanthropy between Syrians living around the *mahjar*. Beyond the practical demands of philanthropic activism, nurturing intellectual links across the transnational Syrian world remained important for symbolic reasons: ‘Isa As‘ad not only compared the experience of diaspora to the hardships of being orphaned, he also blamed French imperial rule for deliberately “partitioning brother from brother, and cutting fathers from sons,” especially in the context of partitioning Lebanon from Syria. To As‘ad, the Mandate system was designed to create more Syrian orphans, both metaphorically and practically.<sup>686</sup> Therefore, as orphans became a symbol for the Syrian national community, caring for orphans served that community with a concrete means of repudiating the Mandate while building an image of Syrian masculinity rooted in piety and strength.

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<sup>684</sup> Jam‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya, ‘*Amal Jam ‘iyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, 4.

<sup>685</sup> Fattuh, “Daud Qostantine al-Khuri,” *Shumu‘ fi-l-Dabab*, 19-20.

<sup>686</sup> ‘Isa As‘ad, “Ba‘d al-Muhajira?” *Homs* 1 November 1922, 1-2.

Whether in Homs or abroad, orphaned children became objects of Syrian social reform discourse during the 1920s. In Brazil's Syrian press, writers often drew analogies between the beleaguered homeland and the plight of young orphans. In the Atlas' magazine, *al-Karma*, young writers told the nation's story through an orphan's pain and redemption. In January 1927, for example, Salwa Atlas published four full-page images of crying boys, asking her young readers to submit captions narrating each boy's story.<sup>687</sup> Young men from *al-Nadi al-Homsi* and around the Syrian colony responded, and the captions were printed the following March.



The respondents described some of the basic hardships of life in the *mahjar*, for example, “this boy cries because his mother took fancy buttons from her *kasheh* and gave them to his sister.”<sup>688</sup> Others explained, “he cries because his parents have

Figure 12: Crying Boy, 1927.  
Source: Salwa Salameh Atlas,  
“al-Tifl al-Baki,” *al-Karma*  
January 1927, 64.

returned from the homeland, and he's forgotten his Arabic,” or “because he cannot understand his grandparents.” Statements about linguistic displacement dramatize the commonplace sense of isolation and generational change that drove a wedge between first-generation Syrian immigrants and their Brazilian-born youngsters. But in 1927, the most numerous responses were political explanations linking orphaned children to French-occupied Syria: “he cries because his father is absent, has gone to assist the devastated in the homeland (*al-mankūbīn fī-l-waṭan*),”<sup>689</sup> or

<sup>687</sup> Salwa Salameh Atlas, “al-Tifl al-Baki,” *al-Karma* January 1927, 22-4.

<sup>688</sup> *Kasheh* (cache) refers to the pack carried by itinerant peddlers. Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 131-2.

<sup>689</sup> In March 1927, *mankūbīn* likely refers to victims of French suppression of the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927. Philanthropic groups abroad sent both funds and manpower to Syria to assist those affected. See Reem Bailony, “Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public: the Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt,” *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies* 1 (2013): 8-29.

“because his parents have forsaken him,” and most clearly, “because he sees São Paulo's orphans in the [*Dar al-Aytam*] *al-Suri*, and he fears he might (also) become one.”<sup>690</sup>

While the *Dar al-ʿAytam al-Suri* in Brazil was coed and admitted Christian children from the Orthodox, Protestant, and Maronite communities, its branch in Homs took in Greek Orthodox boys only. In the Brazilian *mahjar*, the breaking of social barriers between sects and the sexes infused with the colony's politics of modernity. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* itself publicly emphasized the multi-confessional nature of its membership, although in reality its membership remained predominantly Greek Orthodox and Syrian Protestant.<sup>691</sup> In Homs, however, boundaries between the sexes remained fast. Regardless of their actual makeup, however, both orphanages cultivated a public image that remained unambiguously male. In the Syrian press writers made only brief references to the *Dar al-ʿAytam*'s female residents. Photos, stories, and descriptions of the orphanages focused wholly on boys, stressing their vulnerability but also their reform through education. Their degree of visibility and intensive grooming for national service confirmed expectations that theirs would be a lifetime of public and patriotic work.

*“Sound Minds in Sound Bodies:” Intellectual Refinement and Corporeal Discipline*

In both Homs and São Paulo, orphaned boys became symbols of Syria's troubled present and imperiled future. But the provision of an authentically Syrian political education could transform them into capable, self-determined citizens. Orphanages constituted only one aspect of *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s project, however; the fraternity also helped to found secondary schools, colleges, and vocational training centers across Syria.<sup>692</sup> Borrowing from a nineteenth century

<sup>690</sup> Salwa Salameh Atlas, “al-Tifl al-Baki,” *al-Karma* March 1927, 33-5.

<sup>691</sup> Lacking a formal membership roster, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* printed the names of the club's executive officers in their silver jubilee volume, revealing a largely Orthodox membership with a sizable Protestant minority; “Jadwal al-Muntazimin fi-Idarat al-Nadi al-Homsi,” *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 107-10.

<sup>692</sup> ʿAtallah, *Yawmiyyat Mutran Homs*, 15-6.

vision of education as the force for a non-sectarian Syrian modernity (a vision which owed much to the *nahda* and the pedagogical ideas of Butrus al-Bustani),<sup>693</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homs* brought secular “national” education beyond the classroom, into public lecture halls, social parlors, and popular festivals in São Paulo. Founder Jurj Atlas believed popular education and intellectual pursuit (*al-jihād al-‘aqlī*) would forge young Syrian men into the “enlightened class” (*al-ṭabaqa al-mutanawwira*) needed to restructure Syrian society and continue the struggle for independence.<sup>694</sup>

Pedagogy remained one of *al-Nadi al-Homs*’s foremost interests during the 1920s. This faith in national education as a modernizing force derives from the background of the club’s founders. Jurj Atlas had been educated in American Protestant schools, but several more members attended the *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya*, a “national school” established in Homs by Protestant convert Hanna Khabbaz in 1908.<sup>695</sup> Before the War, Khabbaz had opened his school to Syrian students of all classes, sects, and backgrounds, and his curricula emphasized secular patriotism, instruction in Arabic, and Syrian political unity.<sup>696</sup> He was exiled for his efforts in 1914, but in 1922 he returned to Syria, reopened the school and toured the *mahjar* lecturing on the importance of compulsory Syrian national education to combat foreign political domination.

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<sup>693</sup> Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Christians Between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: the Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, No. 3 (1980), 294.

<sup>694</sup> Jurj Atlas, “al-Shab al-Hadith wa-Makmalatihi,” *al-Karma* October 1914, 258-9.

<sup>695</sup> This school first opened as *Kulliyat al-Injiliyya* in 1901, as a Syrian Protestant institution in partnership with American missionaries. Shortly after the reinstatement of the Ottoman Constitution by the Young Turks in mid-1908, Hanna Khabbaz reinvented the school along the lines of a desacralized, patriotic “national school,” and changed the name to *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya*. It was ultimately this history of connection to foreign missionaries that made *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya* one of the institutions targeted for closure by Cemal Pasha’s government in 1915. Khabbaz reopened it in 1922, and relied principally on funding raised in the *mahjar*. On the school, see Rafful Nasir. *Tārīkh Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya al-Injiliyya: mundhu Nasha’iha 1901-1928* (Homs: Lajnat Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya, 1928), 13.

<sup>696</sup> Hanna Khabbaz, “Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya,” *Homs* 25 June 1922, 7.



When Hanna Khabbaz arrived in São Paulo in 1922, he toured *al-Nadi al-Homsi* and was greeted there by his former students, *Nadi* members Nazir Zaytun and Husni Gharrab. That evening he delivered a lecture on anti-colonial pedagogy; over 1,000 Syrians coming from across South America attended. Khabbaz cast the objective of learning in terms of national sovereignty. Khabbaz's concept of education stressed cultivation of all human faculties together, placing equal emphasis on reason, logic, literary capacities, and physical education among young Syrian men. According to Khabbaz, what distinguished this approach from older, traditional Syrian pedagogy was its emphasis on unity and balance. He explained that the brain was divided into several sections, which mirrored Syria's division into spheres of colonial influence (*mināṭiq al-nufūdh*). Because traditional education sought to develop aptitude in the religious sciences at the expense of technical skills or a broader Syrian patriotism, Syrian minds had become as fragmented as the Syrian homeland. There was no mystery in it for Khabbaz: the nation's schools played right into imperialism, turning out students intellectually incapable of self-determination along a national model.<sup>697</sup> The French exploited this handicap capably, partitioning *bilad al-sham*, manipulating Syria's religious diversity to foster social divisions, and importing French educational models to deplete Syrian minds of their sense of history and national destiny. A new pedagogy was needed, authentic and indigenous but simultaneously patriotic and technocratic. For Khabbaz, a successful struggle against imperialism depended wholly on the ability of colonized men to educate themselves.<sup>698</sup>

Khabbaz offered a two-point solution to the problem. First, he argued that Syrians must assert educational sovereignty at home, founding national schools with modern curricula and

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<sup>697</sup> Hanna Khabbaz, *Manatiq al-Nufudh wa-Mamlakat al-'Ilm al-Khalida* (São Paulo: Matba'at al-Ra'id wa-l-Nadi al-Homsi, 1922), 10.

<sup>698</sup> Khabbaz, *Manatiq al-Nufudh*, 6-7, 12.

Arabic-language instruction. Courses must teach practical vocational skills, civics, and patriotic values to craft the Syrian people into a community with like goals and aspirations. Similarly, for Khabbaz the best way to create a patriotic culture in the schoolyard was through the preservation of Syria's authentic "eternal knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-khālīd*): those great Syrian contributions to world civilization, among them mathematics, the medical sciences, and Arabic poetry (*qasīdāt* and *zajal*).<sup>699</sup> Honoring Syrian history and culture went hand in hand with asserting curricular sovereignty, and through Arabic language instruction, national schools would work for public good (*al-maṣlaḥa al-umumiyya*) until Independence was possible.<sup>700</sup>

Khabbaz's audience at *al-Nadi al-Homsi* applauded this approach to education, funding a scholarship program at the *Kulliyyat Homs al-Wataniyya* for impoverished students.<sup>701</sup> This began a tradition of diasporic subsidies for Syria's national schools; in 1929, for example, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* opened its own college in Homs, dedicating it to Syrian National Bloc leader Hashim al-ʿAtassi.<sup>702</sup> But back in São Paulo, schoolhouses remained only one of many sites for a patriotic education. When the clubhouse was not used for festivals, funerals, or lectures, it served as a library for young men with literary or political ambitions. Outlined in its founding charter, the *Nadi* allocated an annual endowment for the collection of historical, literary, and scientific texts in Arabic, Portuguese, French, and English for a community library within its walls.<sup>703</sup> The club brokered deals with the colony's Arabic language presses, specifically the Atlas' *al-Karma*, Rashid ʿAtieh's political daily *Fatat Lubnan*,<sup>704</sup> and later, the printing house *Dar al-Tibaʿa wa-l-*

<sup>699</sup> Khabbaz, *Manatiq al-Nufudh*, 12.

<sup>700</sup> Hanna Khabbaz, "Fi-ʿAlam al-Tarikh: al-Rabita al-Ijtimaʿiyya," *Jada al-Rishad* January 1923, 20-3.

<sup>701</sup> Khabbaz, "Kulliyyat Homs al-Wataniyya," *Homs*, 25 June 1922, 7.

<sup>702</sup> Jamʿiyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya, *ʿAmal Jamʿiyyat al-Rabita al-Adabiyya*, 5, 19.

<sup>703</sup> al-Nadi al-Homsi, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 29.

<sup>704</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi* member Nazir Zaytun purchased the paper from ʿAtieh in 1924. Asʿad, *Tarikh Homs*, 529.

*Nashr al-‘Arabiyya* owned by *al-Nadi al-Homs*i members Jubran and Jurj Bunduqi.<sup>705</sup> Each submitted copies of their materials to the *Nadi*'s collection, and in 1923, the director of the library project, Mikha’il Maluhi, reported to *Homs* newspaper that *Maktabat al-Nadi al-Homs*i had become “the single largest such collection in Brazil” growing at a pace of 1,000 texts annually.<sup>706</sup> Shakib Jarrah, then *Nadi* president, described the library as an integral part of the club's “national duty,” which would abet the enlightenment of Syrians abroad and assist them in “the pursuit of all that is fitting of the name ‘Homs.’”<sup>707</sup>

The *Maktabat al-Nadi al-Homs*i became a place of refuge for an emerging intellectual movement in Brazil, with political philosophy and poetry being the favored media. Member Nazir Zaytun translated the works of Maxim Gorky, focusing particularly on Gorky's theological ideas which he republished in a volume called *Where is God?*<sup>708</sup> Meanwhile his colleagues Daud and Rashid Shakkur wrote a nationalist history of *bilad al-sham* for use in the local Syrian colony, called *East and West*. The volume pinpointed Syria's origins between the Phoenician the biblical eras, and emphasized Syrian contributions to Western history, religion, and society. By reteaching “the enlightened Arab youth” the greatness of their past, the Shakkur brothers hoped to create the type of national solidarities needed for Syrians to “break the yoke of imperialism, and extract themselves from bondage” through a recognition of their political culture.<sup>709</sup>

Although philosophy was the *Nadi*'s primary concern, the group became even more famous for its poetry. Husni Gharrab, Ilyas Farhat, Shafiq ‘Aoun, Anis Joaquim al-Rasi, and

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<sup>705</sup> An important personality in São Paulo's *Hizb al-Watani al-Suri*, Jubran Bunduqi later became a founding member of the *Hizb al-Qawmi al-Ijtima’i al-Suri*. Antun Sa’adiah, *al-‘Athar al-Kamila: al-Risa’il, al-Juz’ al-Awwal* (Beirut: ‘Umdat al-Thiqafa, 1978), 7.

<sup>706</sup> Daud Qostantine al-Khuri, “Sada al-Mahjar: al-Nadi al-Homs,” *Homs*, 28 April 1923, 4-5.

<sup>707</sup> al-Khuri, “Sada al-Mahjar: al-Nadi al-Homs,” 5.

<sup>708</sup> Nazir Zaytun, trans. Maxim Gorky, *Ayna Allah, Aw, I’tiraf ibn al-Sha’b: Ta’ammulat Falsafiyya fi-l-Hayat Masbuka fi-Qalib Qiṣṣa* (São Paulo: Matba‘at Fatat Lubnan, 1934).

<sup>709</sup> Rashid Shakkur, *al-Sharq wa-l-Gharb* (São Paulo: Dar al-Tiba‘a wa-l-Nashr al-‘Arabiyya, 1932), 12.

Musa Kuraïem attended the Club regularly, where they recited *zajal*, the Syrian lyrical style then in vogue.<sup>710</sup> The *Nadi* also invited Brazil's most famous poets--Fawzi and Michel Ma'luf, and Rashid al-Khuri (famously known as *al-Shā'ir al-Qarāwī*) to share their work with the group. By the late 1920s, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s patriotic poetry was widely celebrated across South America, as well as in Syria and Lebanon. In 1932, the group formed a formal literary society called *al-'Usba al-Andalusiyya* (the Andalucian League) and established a literary monthly, *al-'Usba*, to showcase the group's work.<sup>711</sup>

*al-Nadi al-Homsi* offered intellectual amenities that made it unique in the Syrian *mahjar*. The mind's refinement, however, was paired with the body's discipline. The fraternity emphasized physical fitness as the final pillar of a complete Syrian manhood, and physical strength was openly equated with moral fortitude and political sovereignty. "It is commonly said that 'a sound mind (rests) in a sound body' (*al-'aql al-salīm fi-l-jism al-salīm*) because the security of the whole ensures that of all parts," Jurj Atlas wrote in 1914, "the mind is merely one part of that whole totality."<sup>712</sup> In an article explaining the moral benefits of sports, Atlas argued that in addition to preventing bodily decay (*al-inḥiṭāṭ al-jasādī*), physical education underwrote a manly sense of honor to complement an active mind. Physical education, which Atlas alternatively called *al-riyāḍa al-jasadiyya* and *al-riyāḍa al-badaniyya*, was as crucial to the project of making new Syrian men as fluency in Arabic, philanthropic values, and a patriotic worldview.<sup>713</sup> Atlas emphasized team sports like soccer and basketball because both games

<sup>710</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, *al-Nadi al-Homsi*, 17-8.

<sup>711</sup> On *al-'Usba al-Andalusiyya*, see 'Umar Muhammad Duqaq, *Shu'ara' al-'Usba al-Andalusiyya fi-l-Mahjar al-Amriki al-Janubi* (al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya al-Jabaliyya, 1966).

<sup>712</sup> Jurj Atlas, "al-Shab al-Hadith wa-Makmalatihi," *al-Karma* October 1914, 258-9.

<sup>713</sup> Wilson Jacob argues that both terms (*al-riyāḍa al-jasadiyya* and *al-riyāḍa al-badaniyya*) were coined in the Syrian press in Egypt in the 1890s amid scientific theories analogizing strong male bodies with self-reliance, morality, and sovereignty, *Working Out Egypt*, 77-9.

required cooperation. He linked the ability to compete as part of a team directly to a boy's transition into manhood; mere boys play, but when they meet in competition, they rise above themselves and struggle collectively. Atlas contrasted such images of honorable homosocial interaction against the disreputable aimlessness of the Brazilian nightclub, a space where he argued too many Syrian youths wasted their time. Atlas made a strong connection between sporting culture and political liberation: successful nations present a class of men, an “an enlightened class amidst ignorance” cooperating as a team on the world stage, whereas colonized peoples seek only their own small ends at the expense of the whole.<sup>714</sup>

By the 1920s, São Paulo's Syrian colony already had a small collection of sports clubs, the most popular of which was the *Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri*, originally endowed by cotton mogul and industrialist Nami Jafet in 1917.<sup>715</sup> *al-Nadi al-Homsi* formed an affiliation the *Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri*, and urged its members to join either its soccer or basketball program. Men who joined would meet other Syrians and Brazilians of Portuguese, Italian, and German descent on the courts.<sup>716</sup> A common masculine culture of sportsmanship, fair play, and a valuation of the male body as a national symbol emerged in this context. In the words of *Nadi al-Riyadi* president Faris Dabaghi, sports ensured that Syrian bodies, like Syrian minds, would become “strong like steel” (*qawī ka-l-ḥadīd*).<sup>717</sup>

More than any other space in the Syrian colony, sports clubs allowed for social mixing between Syrian men and other immigrant groups living in São Paulo. In an interview with Betty Loeb Greiber, Lily Sa'igh Hashim reported that during her youth in the late 1920s, the *Nadi al-*

<sup>714</sup> Atlas, “al-Shab al-Hadith wa-Makmalatihi,” 260.

<sup>715</sup> Julio Atlas, “Bayt al-Jaliyya,” *al-Karma* April 1932, 42.

<sup>716</sup> Julio Atlas and Faris Dabaghi, “al-Riyada: minni illi, al-Tarikh Ya‘ud Nafsuhu,” *al-Karma* July 1931, 54; Daud Qostantine al-Khuri, “Ila al-Nadi al-Homsi ‘ayyuha al-Suri al-Adib,” *al-Karma* July 1927, 5-8.

<sup>717</sup> Julio Atlas, “Bayt al-Jaliyya,” *al-Karma* April 1932, 42.

*Riyadi al-Suri*'s biggest rivalry was with the local German Club. This rivalry was fueled in part by the fact that the German Club encouraged Syrian players to join their side, as Lily's brother Richard did in 1924.<sup>718</sup> While soccer had long been a popular pastime both in Brazil and among Syrians and Lebanese, the inclusion of basketball raises more questions. An American sport, it is known that American missionary schools in the Mashriq introduced basketball in their sports programs; Lily Hashim recalled that her father Fadlallah preferred basketball to soccer, having played for the Syrian Protestant College before coming to Brazil.<sup>719</sup> In 1930, basketball had caught on in São Paulo; of the *Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri*'s five hundred members, one-third participated in the basketball program.<sup>720</sup>

Although the *Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri* built up the nation's physique, the group publicly denied its role in Syrian and Lebanese politics, claiming instead (as *al-Nadi al-Homsi* did) to have a cross-sectarian membership from all sides of the political spectrum. However, in reality the *Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri* was broadly associated with pan-Syrian territorial nationalism, and particularly the pan-Syrian *Hizb al-Watani al-Suri* then under Khalil Sa'adih. The club's political affiliations sometimes brought controversy, for example in 1925 when many of its number supported the Great Syrian Revolt against the French, provoking conflict with local Lebanese Christians then supportive of the Mandate. That said, *Hizb al-Watani al-Suri*'s support for the sports club lay in Sa'adih's belief that sports mimicked politics and fostered patriotic solidarity. In May 1926, Khalil's son, Antun, offered a speech at the club's annual reception. He remarked that the building of sound bodies and free minds must precede the Syrian people's liberation, and he praised the Syrian men of São Paulo for developing their "physical and

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<sup>718</sup> Betty Loeb Greiber, Lina Saigh Maluf, and Vera Cattini Mattar, "Lily Saigh Hachem e Emelie Saigh Calfet," in *Memórias da imigração: libaneses e sírios em são paulo* (São Paulo: Discurso Editorial, 1998), 50-1.

<sup>719</sup> Greiber, Maluf, and Mattar, "Lily Saigh Hachem," *Memórias da imigração*, 39, 50.

<sup>720</sup> Atlas and Dabaghi, "al-Riyada," *al-Karma* July 1931, 53.

intellectual strengths together” (*al-qawa al-mādiyya wa-l-qawa al-‘aqliyya ma‘an*).<sup>721</sup> Four years later, *Hizb al-Watani al-Suri* president Faris Dabaghi argued that “in playing sports one finds the importance of national life (*hayat al-umma*). What the *Nadi al-Riyadi* achieves in advancing the Syrian name, it similarly seeks to build strength among the players as a unit, influencing our society. (Our team) is like all of the masses, eager for victories,” both on the field and off.<sup>722</sup>

São Paulo's Syrian community did not limit their interest to team sports alone. Body building, weight lifting, and the appreciation of the male physique also became a fad closely related to feelings of anti-colonial nationalism. In the late 1920s, Syrian bodybuilder ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jizawi, or *al-baṭal* (the champion) as he was locally called, toured South America in power-lifting competitions, leaving his home in Santiago, Chile, where he had lived since 1924 (See Image 4). When al-Jizawi arrived in Buenos Aires, the city's Arab nationalist newspaper *al-Islah* ran a feature on him, positing him as the model of masculine strength and soundness of mind. The article gave his biography, emphasizing that he was highly educated, with advanced degrees from both Lebanon and Germany. al-Jizawi was fluent in Spanish, French, and German in addition to Arabic, and before becoming a body-builder he had struck success as a merchant in Chile. All of this at only twenty-five years old, concluded *al-Islah* reporter Nasim Khayrallah. For Khayrallah, al-Jizawi's youth, paired with his well-formed balance between intellect and physique, made him an ideal role model for Syrian youth in the *mahjar*. As *al-baṭal* trounced dozens of competitors in tournaments in Santiago, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo, Khayrallah noted the lifter's serene air and dignified self-possession which he argued presaged true personal

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<sup>721</sup> Sa‘adih, *al-‘Athar al-Kamila*, 2-4.

<sup>722</sup> Julio Atlas, “Ra’is al-Nadi al-Riyadi al-Suri wa-Hadithihi ila-l-Karma,” *al-Karma* August 1931, 29.

sovereignty. Khayrallah drew clear associations between al-Jizawi's physical strength, his mind's clarity, and the physique of the nation.<sup>723</sup>

Two years later, al-Jizawi visited São Paulo, where he arrived at *al-Nadi al-Homsī* for an interview with Jurj Atlas' son, Julio. Julio Atlas has followed his father's footsteps: a lifetime member of *al-Nadi al-Homsī*, he had assumed chief editorship of *al-Karma* in 1930. Sitting down with *al-baṭal* in 1931, Julio clearly saw al-Jizawi as the exemplary Syrian patriot, saying, “tomorrow is our generation's age of strength, for we do not bind our political pillars save by

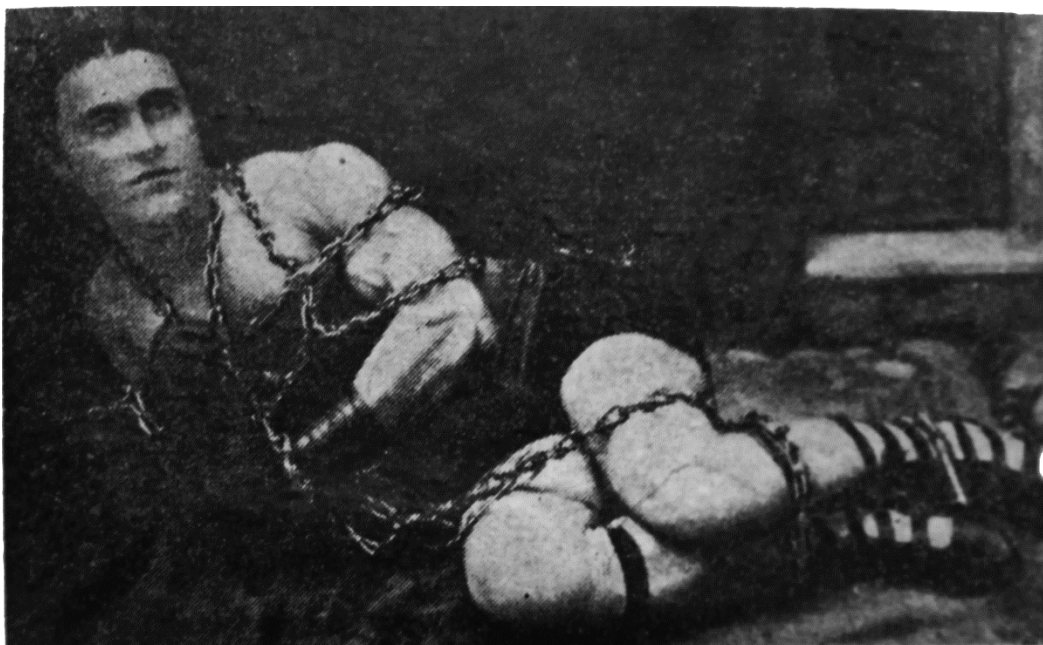


Figure 13: Syrian bodybuilder 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jizawi. Source: Julio Atlas, “al-Batal 'Abd al-Rahman,” *al-Karma* July 1931, 45.

strength, and we cannot win our political goals but with strength. And this strength, these strongmen, (they) show us and the world the ideal way of life.”<sup>724</sup> He detailed al-Jizawi's characteristics: his broad shoulders, and deep brown complexion. At 5'9", the lifter's average stature concealed his strength: al-Jizawi boasted that he could carry 1,000 kilograms on his head.

<sup>723</sup> Nasim Khayrallah, “al-Jaliyya al-‘Arabiyya fi-l-Chile: ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jizawi,” *al-Islah* 17 March 1929, 4.

<sup>724</sup> Julio Atlas, “al-Batal 'Abd al-Rahman wa-Hadithihi ila-l-Karma,” *al-Karma* July 1931, 41.



But what also interested Julio Atlas was al-Jizawi's intelligent eyes and “electric wit.”<sup>725</sup> In the Syrian cult of the body, admiration for the physical form was nearly always accompanied by a discussion of intellectual prowess.

Al-Jizawi told Julio Atlas that he had fancied bodybuilding since his boyhood in Syria, concluding that weightlifting “took him home” in a metaphorical sense. This piqued Julio's political sensibilities, prompting him to ask whether reconnection with Syria was al-Jizawi's political goal. Julio's assumption missed its mark, however, and al-Jizawi insisted that sports brought him back to his childhood, and not to a mythic national past or any political agenda. Undeterred, Atlas pressed al-Jizawi on his politics further, a decision that was clearly unappreciated; Julio admitted that at that point, “the words between us ran out” and the pair fell into charged, awkward silence.<sup>726</sup> This interview dramatizes the expectations Julio Atlas placed upon *al-batal*, demonstrating that the politicization of male bodies often began with the audience rather than with participants themselves. So closely was Syrian sporting culture infused with the politics of nationalism that, regardless of his own motivations, al-Jizawi had to confront such assumptions regularly.

Although misplaced in this instance, Julio Atlas' expectation that sports mimic politics was a common one. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* members frequently invoked sports in political ways, especially in the context of a young man's realization (or reclamation) of his social rank within the nation. Indeed, just weeks after Julio's interview with al-Jizawi, the famous poet Rashid al-Khuri spoke on the topic at the clubhouse, proclaiming that the importance of sports laid primarily in teaching young men to accept social rank. “Trader and writer, poor and rich, strong

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<sup>725</sup> Julio Atlas, “al-Batal ‘Abd al-Rahman,” 42-3.

<sup>726</sup> Julio Atlas, “al-Batal ‘Abd al-Rahman,” 44.

and weak alike... have their obligatory work” on the field and in the nation. While the enlightened man knows each role is of equal worth, al-Khuri argued that a man's strength is in finding (and knowing) his place within that organic political order. Dividing the Syrian community into “bodies tired from practice and toil” and “minds exhausted by hope,” al-Khuri concluded that Syria's “true athletes” were those who joined efforts, striving and struggling together off field, in the realm of patriotic politics.<sup>727</sup>

### *Conclusions*

As a fraternal organization, São Paulo's *al-Nadi al-Homsi* stressed philanthropy, education, and physical discipline as the highest callings of the young male patriot. Each characteristic built on the others, forging an organic whole that would transform Syrian political society, creating an empowered generation of Syrian men ready for the challenges of a modern, civics-minded citizenship. These men provided social services, invested in philanthropic infrastructure, and strove for intellectual and physical self-improvement. Each of these endeavors was tied to *al-Nadi al-Homsi*'s belief that national sovereignty and self-determination started with the construction of an authentic national culture, albeit one with significant transnational dimensions.

The density of the institutional networks laid out above, and the continuous circulation of people, money, printed materials, and ideas between Homs and São Paulo underscored the extent to which Syrians in the interwar period lived transnational lives, whether migrants or not. Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah and 'Isa As'ad founded *al-Nadi al-Homsi* from afar, collaborating with Syrian emigrant “colonists” in a long-distance nationalist project. 'Atallah's *Homs* newspaper was printed in Syria on a press from Brazil; half of *Homs*' readership resided in Brazil, and the

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<sup>727</sup> Rashid al-Khuri. “Ma hiya al-Riyada?” *al-Karma* September 1931, 18-20.

paper's chief editor (Daud Qostantine al-Khuri) was elected *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's president months before his arrival in São Paulo. Hanna Khabbaz's national school in Homs, the *Kulliyat Homs al-Wataniyya* depended on funding raised in *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's clubhouse. Homs' Orthodox orphanage was built on blueprints drawn by Syrian hands in São Paulo.

In sum, *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's philanthropic works tied Syria to São Paulo, the Mashriq to the *Mahjar*. The club promoted a transnational patriotic masculinity to be shared by Syrians living in both places, leading to a degree of transnationalization of Homs itself. Piecing together the fragments of *al-Nadi al-Homsi* 's early records, event ephemera, and the publications of its founders, this chapter has attempted to show how a tightly-bound network of emigrant activists strove to make Syrian men. In doing so, these activists influenced patterns of philanthropy, education, and male sociability not only in the *mahjar*, but also in the homeland. These *mahjari* influences can be successfully written back into Syrian social history if historians think about the diaspora the same way Bishop Athanasius 'Atallah did: as a source of moral, fiscal, and political support, as a culturally fecund human network capable of contributing to Syrian advancement, and most importantly, as a suburb (albeit a distant one) to a modern, post-Ottoman Syria.

## CHAPTER 6: LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM AND TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM: SYRIAN WORKING WOMEN OF NEW YORK BETWEEN TWO MOVEMENTS

On a Thursday evening in March 1918, some two dozen women arrived at the home of Mrs. Sa'ada 'Abd al-Nur in South Boston. Two generations of Syrian women gathered around small tables crowded with Syrian sweets and hot tea: older women who had emigrated from Syria in the 1890s and early 1900s, and their American born daughters growing up in New York City, Lowell, or Boston. Many had been accompanied to 'Abd al-Nur's home by male relatives, but they were promptly excused to a waiting area, and the meeting of the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston came to order. The organization, founded by congregants of the local St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, operated as a local satellite for a larger women's philanthropic movement centered on the Syrian colony in New York. Its objectives were to provide shelter, relief, education, and fellowship to needy Syrian women and girls in the *mahjar*; the group additionally raised monies to remit to female-run charities in Syria. Between the 1890s and 1914, women's groups like the Syrian Ladies Aid Society operated side-by-side with political fraternities, maintaining similar patterns of transnational philanthropy but otherwise entirely independent from men's groups. Growing out of the principles of mutual aid, early Syrian women's groups raised informal cash donations moved through female channels, collected from the sale of baked goods, homemade clothing, or their wages in the textile mills. The \$17.65 collected on that March day was destined for Syrian American women and girls who needed evaporated milk, subsidies for heating oil or rent, or warm clothing for the dragging New England winter.

But with the rise of the nationalist movements in the *mahjar* after 1916, a confrontation was coming; for the Syrian Ladies Aid chapter in Boston, it was this March 1918 evening, for in

the hallway stood one Yusuf Touma, a delegate from a political committee in New York, the *Lajnat Tahrir Suriya wa-Lubnan* [Syrian-Lebanese League of Liberation] led by Ayyub Tabet (see Chapter 2).<sup>728</sup> Representing the devastated Syrians in the homeland as well as the Syrian nationalist movement, Touma had come for the contents of the Ladies Aid's treasury. Touma was not the first male visitor to the women's club, but his appeal – that Syrians in the homeland needed immediate cash relief, and that the duties of patriotism trumped the goals of a local women's charity – introduced a new hierarchy of worthiness that troubled the women present at the meeting greatly.<sup>729</sup> Touma argued that his committee, the *Lajnat Tahrir* in New York, was best equipped to safely funnel cash to the homeland, and he sought money from the women's group not in the name of their sex but that of the nation at large. The club's secretary, a young textile worker named Hannah Sabbagh, recorded the proceedings in the society's records but was unimpressed with Touma's nationalist exhortations. In a tense moment, she asked why her group, devoted to assisting impoverished and deprived women in the *mahjar*, should invest in what sounded to her like a political project, “this is not a political party (like yours); it is a philanthropic organization with pious aims.” Many other young women in the room nodded in assent. Touma shot back, with an air of provocative urgency, “and what is your society's purpose if not that of Syria?”<sup>730</sup>

Invoking a woman's patriotic duty to the homeland, Touma's rhetoric struck the Society's older members, many of who grew up in Ottoman Syria and had already lost relatives to the War.

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<sup>728</sup> The LSLAS's funds were collected by by the *Lajna Tahrir*'s subcommittee for war relief. This branch was called the *Lajnat I'anat al-Mankubin al-Suriyya wa-Lubnan* (The Committee for Syrian and Lebanese Relief).

<sup>729</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 5 March 1918. MC 574, Folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>730</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 5 March 1918. MC 574, Folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

He invoked a Syrian woman's responsibility to guard and uplift society, protect its children, and labor towards national renewal and liberation. His call to Syrian women to "mother" the nation blended old ideas with new. The notion that women had the power (and responsibility) to civilize, enlighten, and revitalize Syrian society emerged in the late nineteenth century.<sup>731</sup> Part of an early Syrian women's movement that pushed for the advancements in education and personal status rights, a woman's primary work remained in the home, in civilizing her husband and educating her children in the interest of social progress.<sup>732</sup> Touma's 1918 appeal to women as the moral sex resonated with the tenor of previous three decades of women's social activism. What was new, however, was his appeal to Syrian women as mothers of the *nation*, and as bearing a special responsibility to work towards the political emancipation of the Syrian people. And approaching the Syrian Ladies Aid Society in particular, Touma addressed not only the middle class society ladies who led the organization but also immigrant working women who made up much of the group's membership. Well-known in the immigrant communities in New York and Boston, the Syrian Ladies Aid pooled together the earnings of young women textile workers with the proceeds of more "polite" sources like ribbon drives, bake sales, and Church bazaars. This funding provided basic philanthropic services and assistance for the community's impoverished Syrian women, particularly workers with small children, absent husbands, and few options.<sup>733</sup> By

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<sup>731</sup> This idea influenced women around the Arabophone Middle East. See Khater, *Inventing Home*, 170; Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 276; Ellen Fleischmann, "The 'Woman Question' in Palestine and the Debate in the Arabic Press," *The Nation and its 'New' Women: the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 83-91; Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 107-10; Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: the Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 168-72. The notion that it was a women's preserve to "uplift" and "civilize" society through her dual roles as mother and wife was certainly a global one, emerging in the late nineteenth century in the Anglo-American context.

<sup>732</sup> Jurj Kallas, *al-Haraka al-Fikriyya al-Nis'awiyya fi-l-'Asr al-Nahda, 1849-1928* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1996), 227-9.

<sup>733</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Society By-Laws, MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

seeking relief money from the Ladies' Aid, then, Yusuf Touma was appealing to Syrian immigrant women as mothers, as patriots, and critically, as workers.

Touma left the group to discuss his proposal, awaiting their response from the hallway. At that moment, a sharp generational divide appeared between members of the Syrian Ladies Aid Society. Older emigrant women, conversant in the idioms of elite nineteenth century Syrian feminism, supported a partnership with the *Lajnat Tahrir*'s relief branch (the *Lajnat Mankubin*, the Relief Committee for the Devastated). In their roles as wives and mothers to society and to the nation, these women saw partnership with the nationalist movement as a means towards women's advancement. The society's younger members, however, mistrusted the paternalistic rhetoric of the nationalist committees like the *Lajnat Tahrir*. Hannah Sabbagh saw Yusuf Touma's proposal as a means by which her organization's objectives—to assist needy women and children and support women's education—would be subsumed by the nationalist cause. In the years following World War I, Sabbagh's Syrian American generation sought political alternatives to nationalism, finding them in the American and international women's movements. In that Boston sitting room in 1918, the gender politics of Syrian long-distance nationalism were laid bare.<sup>734</sup>

By an unprecedented close margin vote, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston resolved to join the *Lajna Tahrir* in homeland relief. They granted Yusuf Touma a significant portion of their Treasury and changed their name to *Jam 'iyyat I'anat Mankubi Suriyya wa-Lubnan li-l-Sayyidat* [the Women's Society for Assistace of Syrian and Lebanese Devastated] to reflect their new affiliation. Having concluded his business, Touma continued along his circuit, stopping in

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<sup>734</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 8 January 1918. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Lowell, Lawrence, and Fall River, Massachusetts before returning to New York City. In the coming months, the Ladies Aid labored to raise cash, warm clothing, evaporated milk, and other relief items for those affected by the war in Syria.<sup>735</sup> Amira al-Hilu described later these wartime efforts in the language of familial sacrifice: as “honored mothers and wives to their men,” the war and its horrors demanded that women put aside demands for equal access to education, work, and social advancement for the interest of “saving Syria from martyrdom.”<sup>736</sup> At the same time, the entry of the Syrian Ladies Aid into long-distance nationalist activism also drew them into the midst of intense rivalries and competing nationalist agendas between the committees of New York. No sooner had Touma left Boston, for instance, than a representative of a competing committee, the *Muntada Suri Amriki* [the Syrian American Club, see Chapter 1] arrived, condemning the *Lajnat Tahrir* as a corrupt émigré social club and claiming that “no more than twenty five percent (of the Ladies Aid’s donations) goes to assist Syrians and Lebanese; the rest will build the committee’s statues in dedication to martyrs.”<sup>737</sup>

Women’s transnational social activism was not a new phenomenon during World War I. In Syria, elites and middle-class women had organized private philanthropic societies within their own circles since the mid-1890s, and similar organizations appeared in the American *mahjar* by the turn of the twentieth century. Before World War I, women’s philanthropic groups emerged independently of the men’s political clubs; organized entirely through women’s social networks, they raised relief for the impoverished, pushed for advancements in women’s

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<sup>735</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 2 November 1917. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>736</sup> Amira Jamal Faylun al-Hilu, “Sharaf al-'Umumiyya,” *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 33.

<sup>737</sup> The delegate’s name was Muhammad Mohsen. His group later convinced the Ladies Aid to contribute to its scholarship funds for returning *Légion d'Orient* irregulars (see pages 19-20 of this chapter), and the relationship between the Syrian Ladies Aid Societies and the Syrian American Club would become close from that point on. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 18 June 1918. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.



education (particularly in adult education), and developed a lively women's press featuring articles written largely by women, for women. Society life and the women's press provided the two lodestars in the emergence of an elite Syrian feminism. These spaces mirrored the men's institutions described elsewhere in this dissertation, with one significant distinction: they labored in service to a community defined by gender rather than nation, seeking the advancement of women's rights, legal status, and access to education and employment.<sup>738</sup> The Syrian women's press, furthermore, was just as transnational as its mainstream counterparts: Syrian women could pick up a copy of *Fatat al-Sharq* in Cairo, *Fatat Lubnan* in Beirut, or *al-Mar'a al-Suriyya* in New York City and read the same editorials by 'Afifa Karam, Labiba Hashim, and Salima Abu Rashed on issues like women's right to work, the desirability of marriage, and the importance of philanthropic social endeavors.<sup>739</sup>

What changed with World War I was that the various nationalist political committees operating in the *mahjar* deployed ideas about political femininity to encourage women's groups to participate in their movement. They called women to service as patriotic "national mothers," invoking the image of the family as a metaphor for the nation.<sup>740</sup> Even as they contributed to the cause by raising money or relief for the nationalist committees of the *mahjar*, many Syrian American women looked upon the paternalistic practices of these same committees with suspicion. This suspicion, moreover, carried over into debates about Syrian motherhood and the image of patriotic of "national" mothers shortly after World War I. This was particularly the case with the second generation: girls and young women born in America to Syrian immigrant parents or having moved there as children. Growing up in the United States during the birth of the

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<sup>738</sup> Jurj Kallas, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Nisawiyya: Nasha'uha wa-Tatawwuruha, 1896-1932* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1996), 12-4.

<sup>739</sup> Kallas, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Nisawiyya*, 34-8; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 154-7.

<sup>740</sup> Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 7-8.

women's movement, these young women increasingly looked towards early American feminism and international women's organizations as models for a Syrian American femininity. The resultant image of modern Syrian "new women"—youthful, modern, conversant with feminist ideals, and demanding improved women's access to employment, activist work, and political organization—emerged in the early 1920s through young women's debates with (and dissent to) the paternalism within the nationalist movement.

Although a series of studies on the *mahjar* have dealt with the "women question" before and during World War I,<sup>741</sup> this chapter pursues the experiences, images, and debates surrounding young working women in the 1920s. Working women—and particularly women who worked in the textile and garment industries—became the primary focus of debates about women's place in the twenties. During the War, female textile workers and their associations played a significant role in provisioning wartime relief, in supporting the *mahjar*'s transnational textile economy, in funding the operations of the nationalist committees in New York, and in liaising with the American humanitarian groups like Near East Relief. Each of these labors brought Syrian American women into new activist roles during the War, shaping the emergence of a new Syrian feminism in the years that followed. But what sorts of anxieties did Syrian "new women" feminists create among their nationalist co-activists, and how did they influence discussions about women's work and workers? In the nexus between nationalism, women's activism, and international feminism, how did Syrian intellectuals in New York City deal with women workers, and how did the *mahjari* feminist debates filter back to the homeland?

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<sup>741</sup> See Akram Khater, "A Woman's Boundaries," in *Inventing Home*, 146-78; Sarah Gualtieri, "Marriage and Respectability in the Era of Immigration Restriction," in *Between Arab and White*, 135-54; Alixa Naff, *Becoming American*; Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab*; Maria Narbona, "The 'Woman Question' in the Aftermath of the Great Syrian Revolt," *al-Ra'ida* 116 (2007), 5-9.

*Syrian Women's Work and Social Activism in New York City and Beyond: a Brief History*

The mass migrations of the nineteenth century were overwhelmingly male, but by the turn of the twentieth century, Syrian women also arrived at Ellis Island in significant numbers. Between 1900 and 1914, thirty-two percent of all new Syrian immigrants were female, a higher percentage than other national groups.<sup>742</sup> While many Syrian women arriving in the U.S. came to join their husbands or male relatives, Sarah Gualtieri demonstrates that many more came to America to work, particularly as peddlers selling household goods door-to-door.<sup>743</sup> The same proletarian economy that allowed for women working in silk-reeling factories in Syria also made labor emigration a viable option for young women; the early Syrian woman workers living in New York and New England came from families that had for some time participated in the transnational textile economy outlined in Chapter 1. Hannah Sabbagh, the defiant young Secretary for the Ladies Aid Society in this chapter's first pages, came from one such family. She left Syria as a child in 1895, accompanying her mother from Ain al-Rummaneh in Mount Lebanon to Ellis Island to join her father, uncle, and brothers, most of whom had already been in the New York colony for four years (the family later moved to Massachusetts).<sup>744</sup> Having worked as dyers and weavers back in Syria, her father and brothers opened a wholesale shop selling textiles; once she was old enough, Hannah worked in the textile factories in both New York and New England, weaving cloth and stitching, her wages off-setting the ups and downs of her

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<sup>742</sup> Sarah Gualtieri compares this figure with Italian women specifically. Italian women immigrated in significant numbers and engaged in some of the same types of labor as the Syrians, particularly in the garment industry. Her figure for Italian women, derived from Donna Gabaccia, is 21%, 11 percentage points below the Syrians; Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004), 68; Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 28.

<sup>743</sup> Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924," 70.

<sup>744</sup> The Sabbaghs were not originally from Ain al-Rummaneh, but from Douma, in Mount Lebanon. In an interview with her daughter, Evelyn Shakir, Hannah Sabbagh explained that the family had move from Douma to Dhour al-Shweir in 1860, and maintained a home there and in Ain al-Rummaneh thereafter. Sabbagh Family Reunion Book, 2-3; Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 4, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI.

brothers' wholesaling business.<sup>745</sup> By the time she defied Yusuf Touma in 1918, Hannah was 23 and had worked as a factory girl for nearly ten years.

Where the lives of Syrian female peddlers have been explored in some depth by historians of the *mahjar*,<sup>746</sup> documenting the lives of Syrian American female factory workers has been complicated by the paucity of material records.<sup>747</sup> Records detailing the lives of Syrian textile workers are hard to come by, but they can be traced through their interactions and engagements with fellow



Figure 14: The Sabbagh Family in 1919. Hannah at Center. Source: Sabbagh Family Reunion Book, Evelyn Shakir Collection, Arab American National Museum.

women garment workers from other immigrant groups in Lower East Manhattan. Syrian women joined much larger groups of Italian, Jewish, and Eastern European women in the shirtwaist factories, where they participated in the immigrant labor movement, for example in 1909 “Uprising of the Thirty Thousand,” a garment worker strike led by the Women’s Trade Union League in New York City.<sup>748</sup> Syrian women also participating at the Bread and Roses Strike of 1912 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, establishing a “relief kitchen” preparing meals of burghul and

<sup>745</sup> Hannah Sabbagh interview with Evelyn Shakir, Sabbagh Family Reunion Book, 5-6; Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folder 4, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI. According to Shakir, Hannah and her brothers later opened a factory making aprons in East Boston; Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Praeger: Westport, CT: 1997), 43.

<sup>746</sup> Gualtieri, “Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis,” 71-4; Naff, “Pack Peddling,” in *Becoming American*, 128-161; Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 38-41; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 82-3.

<sup>747</sup> Shakir argues provocatively that “in the Northeast, many Syrians, both male and female, worked in the textile industry, though their participation in the labor force has been largely ignored by historians of the Arab American experience,” presumably in favor of that of peddlers; Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 46-7.

<sup>748</sup> See Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 221-4.

rice, lamb, and yogurt, for striking millworkers.<sup>749</sup> Twenty-four nationalities were represented at the Lawrence strike in 1912; Syrian women represented 11 percent of all the female strikers.<sup>750</sup>



Figure 15: Syrian textile workers doing piecework in Mahal Michel 'Arida, New York City, 1921. Source: Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 47.

In the Syrian colony on Washington Street in Manhattan, women's labor played a significant, under-acknowledged role in the workings of transnational Syrian textile industry, especially in the production of hosiery, lace, undergarments, and the kimonos that made the New York colony famous.<sup>751</sup> Young women who did not work alongside Italian, Jewish, and Irish immigrant workers in the garment factories of Manhattan often found themselves nonetheless working in piece-work, stitching, or tailoring for smaller clothiers within the Syrian community.<sup>752</sup> Laces, cotton broadcloth, and kimono nightgowns made of a blended silk were the

<sup>749</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 48. The sole Syrian fatality at the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike, furthermore, was a young man named John Ramey who had gathered with some of his compatriots for a "singing march," an action that the police had explicitly forbidden. Ramey was reportedly practicing a melody on his cornet, and, misunderstanding an officer's orders that he stand down, he was run through with a bayonet, trumpet in hand.

<sup>750</sup> Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1830-1912* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 161-2.

<sup>751</sup> Adele Younis, *The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1995), 168.

<sup>752</sup> Sallum Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya* (New York: al-Matba'a al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya fi-



most typical Syrian businesses, and it was widely thought within the Syrian community that women were better suited for such delicate types of work.<sup>753</sup> Established in 1905, *Mahal Michel 'Arida* was one of the first producers of the Syrian kimono, constructed almost entirely through female piece-work and labor. *Mahal Michel 'Arida* followed a fairly typical pattern that illustrates the importance of women's work to the Syrian colony of New York. Having arrived in the 1890s, the 'Arida family had multiplied its number in the first years of the twentieth century as brothers, cousins, and wives came to join the household situated on Washington Street. Michel 'Arida, the family's patriarch, made a living through wholesale trade centered on goods coming through the port with Syrian immigrants. Although his business was a lucrative one, run entirely through the family home, wholesale trading was a risky business, dependent on large capital investments which did not always yield immediate returns.<sup>754</sup> As Michel travelled between ports and buyers across New York and New England, the women of the household began producing simple lacework at home, selling such items to local Syrian stores for a small profit. What began as a household craft swiftly snowballed into an important local industry; in 1905, Michel 'Arida sold his wholesaling

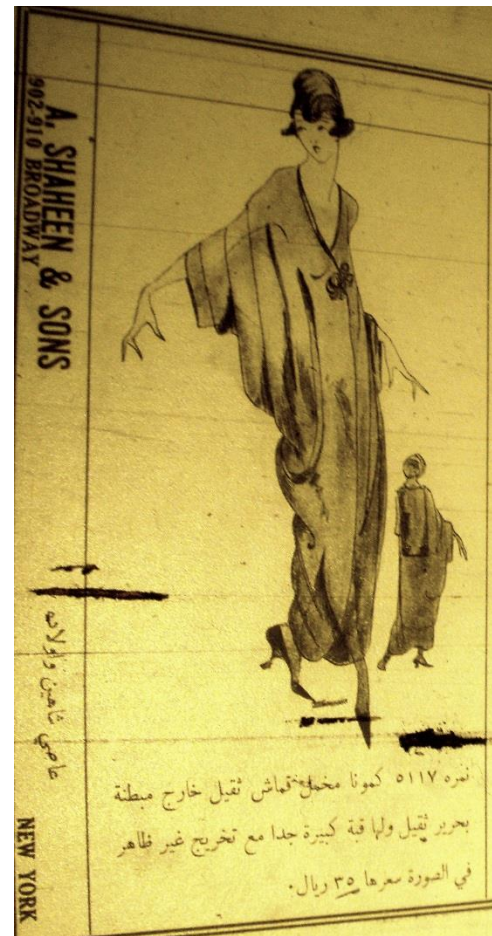


Figure 16: Shahin & Sons Advert for Syrian Kimonos. Source: *Majallat al-Tijariyya al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, August 1919.

Niyu Yurk, 1921), 22.

<sup>753</sup> Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 42-3.

<sup>754</sup> Naff, *Becoming American*, 71.

business, leased a store front on Carlyle Street (adjacent Washington Street), and hired young women from around the colony to produce lace, undergarments, and kimono-style nightgowns.<sup>755</sup> By 1919, the 'Arida store transformed into a full-blown factory, employing over 150 Syrian women to produce silk-blend kimono nightgowns for a mass market.<sup>756</sup>

In the Syrian communities of New York and New England, female labor presented both secondary and primary industries. Making between \$5.00 and \$6.00 cash earnings a week, Syrian women textile workers made more than any other women's trade available on Washington Street: office cleaning, the most common labor for other immigrant women in the district, was not only remuneratively inferior (at \$4.50 a week); it was also seen as dirty and degrading work unbefitting to the Syrian woman.<sup>757</sup> Similarly, Syrian immigrant women who worked in textiles not only fit within patterns of honorable labor established in the Mashriq during the previous century,<sup>758</sup> their steady, regular wages also helped offset household expenses, allowing their husbands or other male relatives to work in riskier, more potentially profitable endeavors like wholesaling or capital investment. Their wages made them important players in the workings of the transnational Syrian cloth economy.

The normalization of women's work in the Syrian immigrant family economy, furthermore, blurred class lines. In both New York and Boston, distinctive Syrian middle and working classes emerged between 1900 and 1920, but at their edges remained families that blended between both. Hannah Sabbagh's family was a good example of this phenomenon: from

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<sup>755</sup> Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 45.

<sup>756</sup> Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 46.

<sup>757</sup> Conducting interviews with women workers from many immigrant groups in the vicinity of Washington Street, the Trinity Church Men's Committee also found that Syrian women engaged in textile factory work at slightly higher rates than they worked in peddling. And however small their weekly wages, the Committee found that factory women made more money than women engaged in office cleaning, peddling, or working in restaurants (the other most typical trades). *A Social Survey of the Washington Street District of New York City* (New York: Trinity Church Men's Committee, 1914), 40-1.

<sup>758</sup> Khater, "Goddess of the House," 329-30.

a family of a middling peasant background, her wages facilitated the businesses of her brothers and cousins, and because of them, the “Sabbagh Bros. Company” lifted the family into a comfortable, middle-class affluence.<sup>759</sup> Hannah’s marriage to journalist (*Fatat Boston*) and political activist Wadi‘ Shakir in the 1920s ended her days as a factory girl.

The ‘Arida concern incorporated a business strategy copied by many Syrian clothiers in greater New York. In the attic, young women unrolled bolts of cloth purchased through Syrian channels at the port, cutting and transforming them into simple kimonos. The kimonos produced were then divided into three groups. The first were placed in the *Mahal* ‘Arida showroom downstairs, a dark wood-paneled space where Michel ‘Arida’s sons, Raphael and Kamil, displayed them for visiting wholesalers. The second group was destined for American boutiques in the greater New York area; silk-blend kimonos became a fad enjoyed by American elites by the 1920s, enriching not only the ‘Arida family but the Syrian colony as a whole. The last third of the kimonos produced went to the port; *Mahal* ‘Arida shipped kimonos to Syria and Lebanon, as well as to Syrian communities in South America.<sup>760</sup>

But while the ‘Aridas branded their use of female labor as indicative of their kimonos’ delicate quality, the business maintained a very strict separation of the sexes.<sup>761</sup> Female employees produced the goods, but they did not trade in them, mix with buyers, or take part in the shipping or sale of the kimonos abroad. The gendered division of labor was typical among the Syrian textile firms in the United States, the pattern likely borrowed from Syrian precedent: the silk reeling factories of nineteenth century Mount Lebanon operated on a similar logic,

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<sup>759</sup> The records of the Sabbagh Bros. Company can be found in the Evelyn Shakir Collection, Box 1, Folders 1-3, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.

<sup>760</sup> Younis, *The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States*, 129. Younis argues that the silk finishing and kimono industries were dominated by Syrian immigrants from Homs, often appearing in the shops of Homs emigrants in other parts of the *mahjar*.

<sup>761</sup> Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 47.



purportedly to protect the delicate (but malleable) honor of young, unmarried factory workers.<sup>762</sup> On the other hand, however, the reliance on female textile workers was not a pattern typical of the entire Syrian *mahjar*. In South America, where textiles were produced in immense factories employing thousands of laborers, weaving, piecework, and finishing were all men's work, as was the case in Nami Jafet's Ypiranga factory in Brazil (see Chapter 1). Why Syrian women in the United States were more likely to engage in garment work than their compatriots in Brazil in Argentina is yet unclear: the garment industries in both South American countries employed large numbers of immigrant women in their factories, just as they had in the United States. Whatever the reason, Syrian immigrant women worked both within Syrian immigrant firms as well as in larger American garment factories with a multinational workforce. As the Syrian kimono industry took off and ever greater numbers of Syrian companies producing lingerie and lace accessories took off, however, Syrian women increasingly sought work in factories run by their immigrant compatriots.

*Mahal 'Arida* may have been one of the first Syrian businesses to incorporate female labor, but the business model was so thoroughly replicated by other Syrian firms in New York and New England that it became commonplace. In 1921, Syrian American journalist Sallum Mukarzil enumerated a half dozen Syrian kimono factories near Washington Street alone, all of which depended entirely on female labor for production.<sup>763</sup> One factory that defied the logic of an all-female labor force was *Mahal 'Abdallah Barsa*. To create a better profit margin, the Barsa brothers integrated on-site weaving with the cutting and construction of kimonos. Nonetheless, the gendered division of labor remained: Barsa's weavers were all men, all of his stitchers were

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<sup>762</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, "'House' to 'Goddess of the House': Gender, Class, and Silk in 19th Century Mount Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 3 (1996), 329-31.

<sup>763</sup> Mukarzil, "Tijarat al-Kimunu wa-l-Mulabisat al-Harira," *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 42.

women, and the two groups of workers worked on separate floors of his expansive factory on Washington Street.<sup>764</sup>

By 1914, then, the New York Syrian colony had developed a class of proletarian Syrian female workers: garment workers in the mills, stitchers and lace-makers in the colony's own kimono industry, and female peddlers who operated home-to-home selling small goods to a female clientele. Young, unmarried women dominated the ranks in each of these types of labor, and by 1914, social issues adjacent to women's work – poverty, access to social services, and the issue of women's work in relation to “traditional” feminine goals like marriage and child-rearing – joined the daily chatter of the well-to-do in the Syrian colony. As unmarried women, what sort of protections should be afforded to Syrian garment workers? Who would protect them against poverty and privation? How would the colony encourage women's social advancement? And most significantly, what was the goal of women's work? Was wage work a life phase to be discontinued with marriage or a means to social mobility and advancement? If women were to continue to work after their marriages (as was typically the case in the United States, because women's cash earnings so easily subsidized their husbands' entrepreneurship), how would the community provide for the children of working mothers? The earliest Syrian women's philanthropic association in New York City, the Syrian Women's Union established in 1896, was organized by immigrant elite women as a polite salon for the discussion of the colony's social ills and women's issues; according to Evelyn Shakir, its founders sewed clothing for the immigrant poor.<sup>765</sup> In the decade to follow, however, working women and women from the immigrant middle class became the liveliest of philanthropic organizers, and their “ladies societies” would incorporate the principles of mutual aid and social reform to create a practical safety net for

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<sup>764</sup> Mukarzil, *Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya al-Amrikiyya*, 48.

<sup>765</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 61.

women workers, women in financial straits, or women in crisis.

The Syrian Ladies Aid Societies, as these groups were collectively called, were established between New York City, Brooklyn, and Boston in 1907, 1908, and 1917 respectively.<sup>766</sup> These groups, while secular and welcoming a multiconfessional membership, got their start among middle class and working women who met in the Orthodox Church; their founders were Orthodox, their first meetings at the Church (although unlike *al-Nadi al-Homsi* and other men's organizations, the clergy did not seem to have had a direct hand in establishing this society). Very soon after their establishment, the Syrian Ladies Societies began holding their meetings beyond the space of the Church in a concerted effort, argues Evelyn Shakir, to maintain a secular (albeit privately pious) orientation and welcome new members from other confessional groups.<sup>767</sup> Such organizations aimed themselves at relieving the burdens of young working women in the *mahjar* by providing food aid, subsidies for coal, heating oil, milk, clothing, and bedding.<sup>768</sup> The Boston chapter also had its own clubhouse and boarding house, which kept impoverished immigrant women off of the streets and also provided a space for new Syrian immigrants to lodge as they sought employment.<sup>769</sup> Volunteers from the community (and when Society funds could afford it, a paid staff member) sometimes provided childcare. Women who

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<sup>766</sup> The group's name in Arabic was *Jam'iyyat al-Is'af al-'Umumiyya li-l-Sayyidat*.

<sup>767</sup> Membership was predominantly Orthodox, Maronite, and Melkite, however. Member records from the Boston chapter do not demonstrate that the Society had Muslim or Druze members. Shakir, "Good Works, Good Times: the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston, 1917-1932," in Eric Hooglund, ed. *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 134-6.

<sup>768</sup> Providing coal and heating oil was a primary goal for the Boston chapter after World War I. According to Secretary Hanna Sabbagh, heating fuel was the most significant cost facing working immigrant women; the second was childcare. The SLAS voted to provide both by stockpiling coal and offering subsidized daycare in 1919. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 30 September 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>769</sup> The clubhouse opened in May 1920, at 101 Tyler Street in Boston's South End. A "Syrian American Press" opened at that same location, likely run by Wadi' Shakir. The Tyler Street house provided a new source of income for the Society; Syrian men's clubs leased extra space in the clubhouse for their events. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 25 May 1920 and 2 June 1920 entries. MC 574, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

required material assistance applied for it, their cases considered by a panel of fellow Syrian working women elected by the membership. Additionally, these groups aspired to raise the lot of immigrant woman workers by offering night classes in English language, typically taught by American social workers who framed interaction with Syrian working women as a part of the “Americanization” process.<sup>770</sup> Like Brazil’s *al-Nadi al-Homsi* and other political fraternities in the *mahjar*, Syrian American women’s clubs emphasized community service and self-improvement as a means of remaking Syrian womanhood. Syrian emigrant women, particularly young ones, were transformed into objects for social reform through education and employment.

Unlike the men’s fraternities, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of New York depended wholly upon private donations from its membership and from Syrian immigrant leaders to provide its services. At \$1 a year, its membership dues brought a modest income, supplemented by cash donations from women’s wages, rummage sales, supper gatherings, and ribbon drives.<sup>771</sup>



Figure 17: The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of New York's First Executive Committee, 1908. Source: IHRC Near Eastern Collection.

The Ladies Aid, in other words, received subsidies almost entirely through female social networks, rather than the institutional endowments that men’s organizations relied upon (recall the Maronite Church’s endowment of New York’s *al-Ittihad al-Maruni* in Chapter 3, or Orthodox

<sup>770</sup> Settlement houses operating in both New York City and Boston also presented spaces where Syrian immigrant women mixed with American social workers from the 1890s through the 1920s. The *Rivington House* in lower Manhattan and the *Denison House* in Boston’s South End provided free courses, lodging, and relief for working women from all immigrant groups. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 17 November 1921 entry. MC 574, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. See also Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 59-60.

<sup>771</sup> Shakir, “Good Works, Good Times: The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston,” 134.

Bishop Athanasius ‘Atallah’s endowment of *al-Nadi al-Homsi* in São Paulo in Chapter 4).<sup>772</sup>

Similarly, the types of relief the Syrian Ladies Aid Society engaged in revealed a particular concern for working women with children. The group emphasized the maintenance of the Syrian working households, indemnifying against the threat of familial disintegration. In an economic environment where many Syrian American women resorted to wage labor, groups like the Ladies Aid ensured the smoother functioning of the transnational Syrian economic system.

The Syrian Ladies Aid Society prided itself on being about women working for women, there were also important class implications to the group’s philanthropic agenda. By identifying working women, mothers, and impoverished women for Society relief, the organization confirmed a philanthropic “hierarchy of worthiness” that saw the preservation of the nuclear household as its most important goal, and they focused on the role of women in maintaining that nuclear household.<sup>773</sup> The Society regularly subsidized young mothers and wives whose husbands were absent from the household, unemployed, or deployed during World War I. Such women were seen as most worthy for the Society’s assistance, and the Society framed its assistance to needy women and children within the obligations of self-provisioning, philanthropy, and benevolence [*iḥṣān*].<sup>774</sup> Payments were envisioned as temporary until the men

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<sup>772</sup> During its first years, the Boston chapter of the Syrian Ladies Aid Society recorded annual donations between \$1900 and \$2200. Of these, the Society had an obligation to direct nearly all of these donations to providing immediate relief; in a typical year, 80 percent of cash donations was expended in either purchasing relief items, remitting to the homeland, or subsidizing Syrian American households. The Society never kept more than \$500 in its Treasury from year to year. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 14 December 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>773</sup> Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>774</sup> Mine Ener analyzes important shifts in provisioning for the poor through private philanthropic giving in the Middle East during this period; she explains that benevolence [*iḥṣān*] and alms-giving [*ṣadaqa*] comprise core philanthropic principles within Islam. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society was founded on secular principles by a group of Christian Syrian women (Orthodox, Melkite, and Catholic), but they nevertheless framed their work in terms of *iḥṣān* and *ṣadaqa*. The philanthropic worldview Ener discusses in *Managing Egypt's Poor* branched beyond the Muslim community as well as beyond the Middle East, into the *mahjar*. See Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence*, 1-2.

returned to resume their place at the head of the household. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society and organizations like it provided important services for women but prioritized certain goals. The organization saw the unification and maintenance of the nuclear family and household as its most important aim. For the Syrian Ladies Aid Society, a secular-yet-pious club whose members came from the emigrant middle class (although perhaps half of the ladies also worked or had done so in their youth),<sup>775</sup> women's progress and advancement began at home. Very rarely did the Society give relief to men, and when it did so, it was in the interest of maintaining the household. When one member's husband was detained at Ellis Island because he lacked proper documentation, for instance, the organization sponsored his passage in the interest of reuniting him with his wife.<sup>776</sup> They also provided her with housing assistance until he got on his feet. The group's regular relief payments demonstrate a concern for mitigating the social ills that accompanied young women's entry into factory work, family disintegration being first among them. Ultimately, the image of the nuclear household that the Syrian Ladies Aid sought to protect was itself a bourgeois construction, a vision idealized by the emerging transnational Syrian middle class.

*Enter the Nationalists: Women's Groups and Patriotic Womanhood through World War I*

Until World War I, women's groups like the Syrian Ladies Aid Society operated more or less independently of the men's political fraternities. But with the development of the diasporic nationalist movements during the War, the same political committees that agitated in favor of Syrianist, Lebanist, or Arab nationalist movements in the Mashriq also intervened in women's social activism, calling for female activists' cooperation with their respective projects. One of the

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<sup>775</sup> Relying on participant interviews and an enumeration of the Boston chapter's twenty five founders, Evelyn Shakir concludes that around 60 percent of them were unmarried, mostly in their twenties (with a few more in their thirties), and working either in textiles or as peddlers. Shakir, "Good Works, Good Times: The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston," 139.

<sup>776</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 16 January 1922. MC 574, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

central ironies in this turn of events is that the women involved did not appear to have overt nationalist inclinations (and others, like Sabbagh, appeared to distrust the nationalist organizations), cash remittances and material relief raised primarily by women workers were some of the most sizable contributions that organizations like *Lajnat Tahrir* took in during the War. Women also participated in fundraising with international organizations, often relying on their contacts within the American women's movement to volunteer with the Red Cross and Near East Relief.<sup>777</sup> Both international organizations, in turn, channeled the efforts of women's groups towards assisting women and children survivors of the War, particularly Armenian women who, Keith Watenpaugh argues, Near East Relief presented as "victims(s) of the rapacious, terrible Turk and requiring rescue by the West."<sup>778</sup> The close connections of American women's groups that Syrian immigrant women were close to with the international humanitarian relief organizations gave the Syrian Ladies Aid Society unmatched access to homeland assistance; women proved, if anything, to be more capable fundraisers than their male counterparts.

Founded in 1915 by American missionaries James Barton, Charles Crane, and Cleveland Dodge, Near East Relief was an American organization that strove to join the interests of local Armenian and Syrian American philanthropic groups, to collect aid and disburse earmarked payments in the Levant as part of the U.S. government's good will mission and in the name of Christian charity.<sup>779</sup> Between 1915 and 1918, Near East Relief reported \$11 million in payments

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<sup>777</sup> Elaine C. Hagopian and Ann Paden, eds. *The Arab Americans*, AAUG Monograph Series 1 (Wilmette, IL: The Medina University Press International, 1969), 68. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society regularly met with Red Cross officials during the War, both for the purposes of raising relief and volunteering. They also invited Red Cross workers to hold lectures for the Syrian community on issues of public health, particularly on matters like hygiene, infant nutrition, and pediatric health. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 17 February 1920. MC 574, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>778</sup> Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920-1927," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (2010), 1337.

<sup>779</sup> See *The Most Terrible Winter the World Has Ever Known* (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1917); see also Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1970), 167-70.

to religious establishments, charitable groups, and schools across greater Syria; in 1919, this sum climbed to \$19.5 million.<sup>780</sup> Like the Syrian Ladies Aid Society, Near East Relief's charter operated on the principle of self-help: "the core of its philanthropy is to work *with* the people and not *for* the people." By working through partnerships with groups like the Syrian Ladies Aid, Near East Relief "forestalled later misunderstandings" about the intentions of the United States government in Syria and its political future.<sup>781</sup> This approach also encouraged women's activism by presenting a ready set of projects and goals.<sup>782</sup> During the War, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society raised donations for Near East Relief and the American Red Cross.<sup>783</sup>

Syrian emigrant women also drew on their experiences and connections to the Syrian textile industry to participate in the relief drives organized by the Syrian and Lebanese political committees of New York. When working with the nationalists, however, there was much more concern about what sorts of political work a woman should do. In the Syrian neighborhoods of New York and Boston, the politics of the press, petitions, and other sorts of public engagements were seen as male endeavors. Rarely did women write for the community's major political periodicals, although there were notable exceptions, like 'Afifa Karam. But by engaging in philanthropic and humanitarian measures, particularly in those spaces already coded "female," women contributed to the relief efforts led by the nationalist committees in New York,

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<sup>780</sup>James Barton, "Near East Relief Consummated: Near East Foundation Carries On," in *Story of Near East Relief* Pamphlet, 1944, 4-5, Philip K. Hitti Papers, Box 19, Folder 1, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>781</sup> Although after the War, Near East Relief's involvement in providing aid for Syrian communities was nevertheless read by some Syrian activists in New York as support for Syrian independence. In 1919, for instance, the Syrian National League lobbied President Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. Department of State for a U.S. mandate over the Levant, presenting the idea as the logical "next step" to follow America's wartime humanitarian relief; Evelyn Shakir Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI.

<sup>782</sup>James Barton, "Near East Relief Consummated: Near East Foundation Carries On," in *Story of Near East Relief* Pamphlet, 1944, 14, Philip K. Hitti Papers, Box 19, Folder 1, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>783</sup> Shakir, "Good Works, Good Times: The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston," 134.



principally through *Lajnat Tahrir* and the *Muntada Suri Amriki*. The factory floors of Syrian textile firms transformed into an activist space functioning in concert with the nationalist movement. In these factories, skilled women workers produced relief items like blankets, warm coats, and undergarments for shipment to Syria, engaging their employers in the New York colony in the meantime.

A philanthropic “putting out system” developed among women who worked in textiles. Factory owners donated bolts of raw cloth, which Syrian women would finish into clothing, bedding, and other essentials, either in the factories after hours or in their homes. Some of these items would be given to the Red Cross, Near East Relief, and the *Lajnat Tahrir* for shipment to Syria. Others would be placed in Syrian shops, sold at market value, and the proceeds would be donated to funds for Syrian relief. The system not only joined Syrian employers, merchants, and women workers into a common activist pattern; it also joined activists working in New York with their compatriots in the mills of Fall River, Lawrence, and Boston. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society, for instance, arranged such a contract with a New York wholesaler and *Lajnat Tahrir* boardmember, Adolph Nahhas.<sup>784</sup> Nahhas sent cotton broadcloth to the Society’s branches in Brooklyn and Boston, where women textile workers would piece them into garments to be sold; the profits were returned to the political committee in New York at regular intervals.<sup>785</sup>

The Syrian Ladies Aid Societies also campaigned for and supported Syrian American enlistment into the Allied armed forces, including both the U.S. Army and the French-led *Légion d’Orient*. But in this effort, women’s groups played a complementary role demonstrative of a

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<sup>784</sup> Nahhas was a boardmember of the *Lajnat Tahrir Suriya wa-Lubnan* in New York; his name appears on the printed stationery of League appeals to the U.S. Department of State. NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929, group 5, roll 450. 10 November 1919 letter from Syrian-Lebanon League of Liberation to William Phillips, Asst. Sec. of State, New York. document 763.72119/1685, 1.

<sup>785</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 20 May 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

gendered division of activist labor. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society raised money for volunteers in the *Légion d'Orient*, but earmarked the money not for recruitment or for shipping boys to the front. Instead, the Ladies' Aid money was put into a trust with the *Syrian Educational Society*, where it would await the return of *Legion* volunteers and pay for their college education.<sup>786</sup> The *Syrian Educational Society* was a New York organization founded by Syrian Protestant College graduates Fuad Shatara and Philip Hitti. Approaching Syrian independence and nationalism through educational development (rather than armed conflict), the group's purpose was "to promulgate among the Syrian people the vital necessity of giving higher education to the young," and to enact a "plan... whereby the Syrian people through this Society will aid in the reconstruction period in the old home land" after the War's end.<sup>787</sup> Both Shatara and Hitti had succeeded in the U.S. university system and argued that a new patriotic pedagogy modeled on the American system would prepare Syria for rule by an "educated political class" that they hoped to train in the *mahjar*. In a speech delivered to donors in 1919, Philip Hitti cited both the "special connection America has with the revival of Syrian intellectual scene" and the enthusiasm of "young Syrian-American leaders and teachers" in New York City as proof that his goals to educate Syrian émigrés in preparation for their return to Syria was the best means by which to advance the move to independence.<sup>788</sup> The threat was otherwise, Hitti warned, that lacking a technocratic leadership, Syria would devolve into a "Bolsheviki situation as in Russia- the masses trying to rule and making a mess of it."<sup>789</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 10 September 1918. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>787</sup> Joseph Ferris, "The Syrian Educational Society," *The Syrian Review*, December 1917, 15-6; Philip K. Hitti Papers, Box 18, Folder 1, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. Like many educators and Syrian intellectuals in New York (especially those linked to the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut), Philip Hitti and Fu'ad Shatara sympathized with Faris Nimr's Moderates Party, the principle group pushing for an American Mandate over the Levant in 1919 (see Chapter 2).

<sup>788</sup> Philip K. Hitti Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>789</sup> Philip K. Hitti Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

In partnership with Dr. Hitti's group, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society maintained a \$1400.00 scholarship endowment that would start Syrian American veterans off in higher education. Returning Syrian American soldiers participated in a small school, called the Syrian College, also established by Philip Hitti, where they would receive core instruction in both Arabic and English as well as intensive training in American educational culture. The goal was to produce Syrian American transfer students bound for mainstream American universities, where they would complete their degrees.<sup>790</sup> In enrolling the former *Légion d'Orient* troops, Brooklyn's Syrian College rewarded their service but also encouraged interaction between returning soldiers and the Syrian American community at large. The *Légion d'Orient* scholarships also had the effect of drawing young Syrian men from across the entire *mahjar* to New York City's colony (many of the irregulars had not originated in New York), all for the goal of encouraging a new Syrian political class, ultimately with the goal of returning to Syria.<sup>791</sup>

Modest as it was, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society scholarships were ultimately an interest-free loan to be paid back after graduation.<sup>792</sup> The reimbursement requirement fit the Society's mutual-aid principles and philanthropic agenda; these funds promoted the social good, but became sustainable as the endowment grew through a combination of reimbursements and new donations.<sup>793</sup> But the Ladies Aid was interested particularly in improving Syrian girls' chances at

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<sup>790</sup> Philip Hitti, *Educational Guide for Syrian Students in the United States* (New York: Syrian American Press, 1921), 34.

<sup>791</sup> It is unlikely that the "return to Syria" as Hitti conceived it actually occurred. Hitti's 1919 goals for the Syrian College in Brooklyn were originally conceived during the height of the "New Syria" party activism (and Hitti was a founding member of the Syrian National League of New York). Emir Faysal's defeat in July 1920 and the construction of the French Mandate in Syria was, for many of the "New Syria" activists, a surprising reversal of political fortune that likely changed Hitti's plans. On Hitti's involvement with the Syrian National League of New York, see NARA M367, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, group 59, roll 440. Hitti and Saleeby, Syrian National League to U.S. Sec. of State. New York City, 16 October 1919. Document 763.72119/7279, 1-2.

<sup>792</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 7 February 1924. MC 574, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>793</sup> Hitti, *Educational Guide for Syrian Students in the United States*, 34.

higher education, so in addition to working with the Educational Society to acculturate Syrian irregulars, the group introduced a few initiatives directed at young women: scholarships, free classes in English, and social events that promoted cooperative female social action. By 1921, for example, the two organizations had placed fifteen students at nine institutions in the New England area; of these, one scholarship went to a young woman studying at Boston University.<sup>794</sup>

By participating in the relief effort, raising money and goods to assist Syrians at home, Syrian women activists assisted the nationalist movement through a gendered division of activist labor. But despite how central working women's contributions were to wartime relief, the discomfort some Syrian American political activists felt with women's wage labor crashed into the mounting feminist demands of emigrant working women. The result was a set of images and debates about young Syrian women as mothers, as workers, and as radicals in the early 1920s.

*Work, Marriage, and Motherhood: Feminist Debates and Nationalist Anxieties in the 1920s*

During World War I, Syrian feminists, philanthropists, and social activists entered into new kinds of political relationships with the political committees of New York. Although women's wartime activism followed a strict gendered division of labor, their contribution was sizeable and in many ways dependent on the labor of female textile workers. But after the War, the same nationalist discourse that allowed women to participate through philanthropic social activism as patriotic mothers also produced intense anxieties about women's wage work and other "incursions" into male political spaces. At the same time, a younger generation of Syrian American feminists came of age in New York. Well-versed in the American women's movement and increasingly interested in international feminism, these "new woman" feminists alarmed male nationalists thorough their critiques on patriarchy and "traditional" Syrian culture. Within

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<sup>794</sup> Hitti, *Educational Guide for Syrian Students in the United States*, 34.

nationalist circles, concerns that Syrian American young women had radicalized fueled discussions about the relationship between women's roles as workers, wives, and mothers. In the meantime, debates about marriage and the changing Syrian American household revealed the yawning disjuncture between interwar Syrian feminism and nationalism.

As we have seen, the ideals of self-improvement, the pursuit of enlightenment, collective striving, and gender complementarity provided the bases for early Syrian and Lebanese nationalist thought in the 1920s *mahjar*. Although Syrian and Lebanese women had engaged in factory work, textile production, and other forms of wage labor since the 1870s, a woman's place was generally thought to be the home, her primary role that of wife and mother. Even with the development of a "patriotic motherhood" during the War, the political roles of Syrian and Lebanese women remained confined to the home, particularly in the upbringing of children. Despite working women's participation in nationalist activism in New York's Syrian colony, it was generally assumed that women's work proved exceptional, socially acceptable in time of crisis, but as a temporary means to an end. After 1920, Syrian feminists who advocated for female employment outside the home contended with public perceptions that working women would be incapable of living up to their feminine duties to "civilize" their husbands or educate their children. Public debates that began in the late nineteenth century surrounding the intersection between women's work and female honor continued in the *mahjar* through the 1920s, and Syrian women living in the diaspora continued to pursue employment, sorting out questions about honor in the meantime.<sup>795</sup>

In the 1920s, Syrian and Lebanese feminists in New York wrote fervently in the women's press on the issue of women's work and family honor, seeking to find a niche between a

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<sup>795</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 94-9.

woman's two roles: as worker, and as maternal figure in the home. One of the most common ways feminists achieved equilibrium was to present wage work as a natural extension of a woman's duties at home. If patriotic mothers were to labor in the home to raise good citizens and assist their husbands, then was not wage work also done in service to the household? A young Syrian American feminist from lower Manhattan named Victoria Tannus clearly thought so. She argued in the newspaper *al-Akhlaq* in 1924 that "most of us view with favor a woman who works to help her husband if circumstances necessitate it," because such labors were a natural extension of the demands of marriage: "To my sisters, do not shy away from these types of work...your daily sacrifice for the success of your husbands."<sup>796</sup> In a similar vein, editor Amira al-Hilu explained, "after her marriage, the life of a Syrian woman is not her own but belongs to her family. This is because the truest love requires sacrifice. In the real world, her sacrifice is for her beloved husband and children."<sup>797</sup> By encoding women's work within the language of feminine sacrifice (rather than in emancipation or liberation from patriarchy), these authors framed their arguments in favor of working women within the expectations that family, home, and household remained a woman's first priority. They fit their feminist objectives within the dominant maternalist rhetoric of the time; the factory, in turn, became an extension of the household.

At the same time, these feminists argued that the benefits of women's work outside the home were more than economic. By working in American factories, among American women, Amira al-Hilu argued that Syrian emigrant women would be privy to some of the cultural and intellectual gains of American society, among them, individual rights and social equality. Hilu argued that by discarding norms "from the Mountain" like women's seclusion, Syrian immigrant women could acculturate "into the modern modes" of mainstream American life. Working

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<sup>796</sup>Victoria Tannus, "al-Mir'a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa," *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 22-4.

<sup>797</sup>Amira Jamal Faylun al-Hilu, "Sharaf al-'Umumiyya," *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 33-4.

mothers, she added, would bring American ideas to their children, “provid(ing) them with a meaningful intellectual revolution.”<sup>798</sup> In al-Hilu’s estimation, a woman’s maternalist role as a cultural alchemist and teacher is maintained. Wage work proved a new means to that same end.

‘Afifa Karam argued more pointedly that Syrian women workers in America had a responsibility to engage with the American women’s movement and its ideas. Responding to a letter from *al-Huda* editor Na’um Mukarzil which argued for Lebanese women to strive in the home towards raising properly patriotic children invested in the homeland and its politics, Karam responded that a woman’s national work extended far beyond the household, and the entire nation (not merely her children) were to be her pupils. “(The Syrian American woman) is not a daughter from a single village. She must come to grips with two civilizations—East and West—that seem permanently at odds within her... she sees in herself the traditions, character, and mannerisms of both ways of life.” If Mediterranean and Atlantic cultures were two distinct seas, Karam argued, “why should she (the emigrant woman) not drink of both? Young women who are growing up today cannot be forced to conform to a way of life from the past.”<sup>799</sup> If even “that man of great nationalism... the honorable Mr. Mukarzil describes the need for patriotic men to honor the culture they are living in abroad,” Syrian American factory women were well-placed to “make the most of their combined cultural wealth” as simultaneously Syrian and American. By blending some of the cultural, social, and political ideas of the American people, Karam concluded that women workers labored in the interests of the entire nation:

“We (as Syrians) are a small people, our homeland threatened as much by deficiency and ignorance as by (political) domination. Our predicament obliges us to blend and mix our customs”<sup>800</sup>

<sup>798</sup> Hilu, “Sharaf al-‘Umumiyya,” 34.

<sup>799</sup> ‘Afifa Karam, “al-Thaluth al-Ijtima‘iyya,” *al-Akhlaq* May 1923, 4-5.

<sup>800</sup> Karam, “al-Thaluth al-Ijtima‘iyya,” 5.

By framing her feminist appeals for women workers within the obligations of immigrants to blend within American society, Karam pushed into a notion commonly employed by long-distance Syrian and Lebanese nationalism: that America was the model for anti-colonial political success, and that Syrian and Lebanese political culture would do well to emulate or integrate aspects of American society as observed by the emigrants. *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* member Habib Katibah, for instance, regularly described the need for a mutual program of edification and cultural uplift between East and West; as a writer and manager of a reading room on Washington Street, he saw this exchange happening through the production and sharing of good books, "it is obligatory for us to translate the most important books from language to language, and into the vernacular, in order to achieve intellectual progress."<sup>801</sup> Similarly, Ya'qub Rufa'il attributed American gender attitudes to America's "undisputed civilization, and its influence over the enlightened world." In a piece on Mother's Day, Rufa'il explained,

"The beautiful and endearing feelings of men for the women in their lives, these women who lighten the otherwise heavy burdens of daily life...(these women) participate in our affairs and bring their labors to support us. The greatest man is he who labors for his women just as she labors for him."<sup>802</sup>

As political projects, Syrian American feminism and long-distance nationalism shared important intellectual features: the obligation to civilize, progress, and uplift the national whole through novel forms of education and labor, and the translation of American norms and knowledge learned in the *mahjar*. Karam and other emigrant feminists used these two shared goals as the best means to converse with the nationalists; they made appeals in favor of women's wage labor in the context of a grander project for familial and national enlightenment.

If a woman's work in the factory contributed to the cultural advancement of her nation

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<sup>801</sup> Habib Ibrahim Katibah, "Madha Yajib 'an Taqra'a wa-Kif," *al-Akhlaq* April 1923, 15.

<sup>802</sup> Ya'qub Rufa'il, "Nazarat: Mahabbat al-Umm," *al-Akhlaq* May 1923, 1.



and her children, so too would it contribute to the civilization and domestication of Syrian American husbands. Victoria Tannus and other immigrant feminists railed against popular perceptions that working women made poor wives by presenting a countervailing image: the aging and illness-ridden bachelor who scorned to marry a factory girl. In 1923, Tannus published the tale of a fictional 41-year old bachelor named Wadi'. In "Do you Despise the Working Woman?", Wadi' approached a female matchmaker, who walked him up and down Washington Street introducing him to dozens of the Syrian colony's most eligible ladies. Each woman was highly educated, polyglot, impeccably dressed, morally incorruptible, and more beautiful than the last; they comprised the feminine ideal of the Syrian American imagination. Growing increasingly impatient, Wadi' begs his matchmaker to find him a "most virtuous" wife, a subtext lost on the matchmaker until,

"he then told me he did not want to marry a woman who had worked for her means, whether she labored in the very best market, or toiled in the lowest trades. He would not seriously consider a working woman as an option for himself, even if her morals and manners were undisputed."<sup>803</sup>

Tannus argued that far from protecting Wadi' from sinfulness, his "scorn for women who work" did naught but reduce him to an elderly bachelorhood, rendering him incapable of fulfilling his own honorable role as husband and head of household. Attitudes like Wadi's also damaged Syrian American society as a whole, Tannus continued, because they mitigated working women's abilities to find a suitor, impeding their civilizing work as women.<sup>804</sup> Both trends, she continued, were socially disruptive and needed revising in the interest of the community's advancement.

After laying out the sad story of Wadi', Victoria Tannus described the trades of illustrious American women: Helena Taft, for instance, worked as a teacher, while Woodrow Wilson's

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<sup>803</sup> Victoria Tannus, "Hal Tuhta qar Al-Fatat al-'Amila?" *al-Akhlaq* January 1923, 18-9.

<sup>804</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 71.

daughter, Margaret, was a famous singer. As prominent examples from presidential families (one of which, Wilson, was seen as a hero among Syrian and Arab nationalists in New York), Tannus pointed out that an American woman's decision to work did nothing to mar her honor: "no young American men scorns her for seeking her economic independence. Nor do they subtract it from her moral or marital worth." Drawing on mainstream American examples implied that Syrian American men must live up to their rhetoric of civilization, and Tannus concluded they could begin by joining Syrian women in abandoning "ignorant traditions that no longer suit them." Until then, the threat of spinsterhood loomed large for Syrian American women who, while educated and very eligible, would be overlooked because their lives in the diaspora necessitated their employment in trades beyond the household "to earn a life for her family."<sup>805</sup>

Feminists like Victorian Tannus, Amira al-Hilu, and 'Afifa Karam each argued for wage work as a natural extension of a woman's matrimonial and maternal roles, a strategy that placed women's work squarely within the nationalist ideals of patriotic motherhood. But at the same time, prominent Syrian nationalists in New York persisted in citing women's work as the cause for the colony's social ills, particularly for rising rates of divorce, the idleness of male youth, and the petty street crime that sprang from it. A founding member of the *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*, newspaper editor Ya'qub Rufa'il employed these ideas in a letter on the ongoing problem of male violence in the *mahjar*.<sup>806</sup> In the 1920s, the New York Syrian colony saw a surge of street violence among young men: fist-fights, sometimes involving dozens of participants, broke out on Washington Street, particularly in the men's cafes known as haunts for

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<sup>805</sup> Tannus, "Hal Tuhtaqar al-Fatat al-'Amila?" 19.

<sup>806</sup> As editor of *al-Akhlaq*, the first Arabic serial in New York to integrate its editorial staff by hiring several women writers, Rufa'il was in a delicate position. On one hand, he remained unsympathetic to Syrian American feminism and was particularly concerned with potential disruptions to Syrian home life. For all his reticence about the Syrian American women's movement, his serial was the first Arabic periodical in the U.S. to publish the views of Syrian American feminist, bringing the "woman question" to a broader *mahjari* audience.

local bachelors and politically conscious alike. Practical reasons for the mounting tension included competition between settled immigrants and new arrivals for limited employment opportunities, endemic grinding poverty, isolation from family support networks, and continuing political controversies over homeland politics.<sup>807</sup> The frustrations of young Syrian immigrant men were many and reports of fighting common, grabbing the attention of the Washington Street district authorities and reform-minded Syrian journalists alike.<sup>808</sup> Mounting concerns about rising crime in the Washington Street district led the New York State Crime Commission to launch an investigation into its causes in 1927. Among issues like crowding and chronic male under-employment, the Commission's report cited the abundance of immigrant men's recreational spaces like cafés, reading rooms, and printing houses and immigrant working women's absence from the household as they toiled in the factories as root causes for violent crime on Washington Street. Male idleness, homosocial crowding, economic distress, and rivalries within (and also between) immigrant groups created opportunities for petty disagreements to explode into gang violence, mobbing, and fighting between groups.<sup>809</sup>

For some, the problem stoked fears about general cultural decline, but for Rufa'il, the diagnosis was clear: the disintegration of the Syrian American family, brought on by climbing divorce rates and the contradictory demands of Syrian working women.<sup>810</sup> "The *muhajirin*," he

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<sup>807</sup> "Crime Board Tells How Boy Gangs Rise in New York Slums," *New York Times* 20 March 1927, 1.

<sup>808</sup> The *New York Times* reports that many disputes between Syrian men escalated into gun battles and chains of reprisals. See an 1927 shooting altercation outside *al-Huda* press (one Faris Dreeka shot Fatal Kozol), "Shot by Police in Chase: Prisoner Accused of Wounding Man in Fight in Brooklyn," *New York Times* 28 December 1927, 2. This new focus on violent crimes in the Washington Street area, however, was certainly informed by changing American attitudes concerning immigration and urban poverty in the mid-1920s.

<sup>809</sup> "Crime Board Tells How Bot Gangs Rise in New York Slums," 1.

<sup>810</sup> Rufa'il's fixation on divorce and his connection between divorce and anxieties about cultural decline were demonstrative not only of Syrian American discourses on the family but of the broader American discussions on the topic. American intellectual society was fascinated by the prospect of romantic marriage during the 1920s, and with discussions about love being the best basis for a marriage came an attendant discourse about divorce and its social impacts, the roles played by the "modern woman," and changing norms of courtship among young people. See Elaine Tyler Mary, "The Path of Modern Marriage," *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 65-75. *Al-Akhlaq* furthermore followed this discussion

began, “have overall been successful, become wealthy, and are less prone to danger than their compatriots in the homeland,” began Rufa’il in 1923; however, the *mahjar*’s material success produced contradictory changes for men and women. While the promise of wealth drew ever larger numbers of young single men into the diaspora, Rufa’il believed that Syrian American women’s wage work and material comfort let them to delay their first marriages while making them more likely to divorce. To Rufa’il, the institution of marriage “has a civilizing effect on the Syrian man,” and the rising numbers of unattached men was a clear cause for social unrest and even violence.<sup>811</sup> He described crime and divorce as linked “social illnesses” [*al-amraq al-ijtima’iyya*] that were “part of a larger social assault on the family” which threatened the respectability of the Syrian immigrant community.<sup>812</sup> By choosing to work rather than marry, a working woman shirked her responsibility to maintain her community’s social order. Both Tannus and Rufa’il described women’s matrimonial roles as civilizing, particularly in domesticating the men of the colony. But where Rufa’il blamed women’s work for men’s uncivil acts, Tannus laid the blame squarely at the feet of an antiquated disdain for women’s work. Whomever was to blame, discussions about women’s work were often accompanied with the image of unwed Syrian men, often brutish, violent, and in need of a woman’s civilizing touch. This image was employed in arguments against women’s work as well as in its favor.

The culturally degraded emigrant man was a recurring stock character in *al-Akhlaq* and in discussions about Syrian American marriage and motherhood generally. Images of wayward bachelors also combined with generalized anxieties about *ghurba*, a cultural alienation brought

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closely, translating American writings on romantic marriage and even on the necessity of divorce alongside Rufa’il’s criticisms of the practice. See Leonard McGee’s “Nine Causes for Misery in Marriage,” in Arabic translation, “Tisa’a Asbab Muhima li-Shaqa’ al-Haya al-Zawjiyya,” *al-Akhlaq* February 1924, 47-9.

<sup>811</sup> Ya’qub Rufa’il, “Nazarat: al-Talaq,” *al-Akhlaq* January 1923, 3-4.

<sup>812</sup> Rufa’il, “Nazarat: al-Talaq,” 3.

on by confrontations with an alien American culture. Syrian American women writers, whether feminist or not, described the mitigation of *ghurba* to be a woman's special preserve: as wives, they gave their husbands a household to strive for, as mothers they bore responsibility for passing on both folk culture and a good moral character to their children. In a 1924 article on the children's education, Adme Hazuri recounts a common Syrian American parable about a wayward emigrant bachelor.<sup>813</sup> The young man, a peddler who left his mother's home in the Lebanese mountains, had "wandered without aim from town to town" for a full year, becoming not wealthy and successful, but a listless, debauched vagrant. *Ghurba* was his only companion, and his distance from significant female figures (presumably his mother, sisters, potential wives) had degraded him into a state of near barbarism. One day, he walked by a home where a small Syrian girl was hanging laundry on a line in the yard. She sang to herself a folk song her mother had taught her, unaware of the vagrant who stood at her gate. Recognizing the song, the same one his mother cooed to him as a child, the man broke into unrestrained weeping "for all the pains and sorrows he had caused for those around him."<sup>814</sup> The girl's song ended and she returned to her house, but the man was forever changed. According to the story, he returned to Lebanon, repented sincerely, and recommitted to the life of a proper, civilized man. Hazuri concluded that "our children are like gems in our hands. We are obliged to refine them in every way possible. We must shape the ranks of our children until they radiate with light."<sup>815</sup>

Hazuri confirmed that responsible motherhood was the primary work of Syrian American women, arguing that a child's education should incorporate the passing on of folk traditions as a

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<sup>813</sup> Adme Hazuri was a well-known social worker in New York's Syrian colony. In introducing her piece in *al-Akhlaq*, editor Ya'qub Rifa'i described her as an expert of family issues. Hazuri also gave lectures on children's education and household hygiene to Syrian women's groups, see Adme 'Atieh Hazuri, "Kayfa Nurabbi Awladna," *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 52.

<sup>814</sup> Hazuri, "Kayfa Nurabbi Awladna," 52.

<sup>815</sup> Hazuri, "Kayfa Nurabbi Awladna," 53.

means of combatting personal and societal alienation. But in her entire article, the singing girl's mother remained conspicuously absent. Hazuri did not clarify whether she was in the kitchen or at the factory, nor did she weigh in on the larger issue of women's work or its influence on the family (indeed, she cautiously avoided it *al-Akhlaq*, a journal where the topic was broached regularly). But she did assert that a woman's capacity to uplift, civilize, and domesticate Syrian society (and men in particular) radiated beyond her immediate presence, an argument that Syrian American feminists would use to make claims on public spaces previously reserved for men only. Through discussions about a woman's capacity to civilize came a new feminist objective: to advance women's access to certain types of public spaces in order to advance society at large.

*"New Woman" Feminism in the Mahjar: Where Do Women Belong?*

Beyond the factory floor, in the 1920s Syrian American feminists sought to increase women's access to the public spaces, debates, and political stylings that had up to that point "remained a man's game."<sup>816</sup> In the early 1920s, these feminists demanded more equitable editorial representation in the Syrian and Lebanese press and equal access to public spaces like theaters, cafes, and clubs. Feminist claims upon these spaces invoked the same theory of a woman's special power to civilize, uplift, and educate any of the men she encountered along the way. Their appeals stretched across transnational space, the debates linking Syrian women in New York to Beirut, Cairo, and elsewhere in the *mahjar*. They called the feminist ideal they constructed the "new woman," and although her power to civilize her surroundings through proximity was quite old, the deployment of this idea in service to allowing women into traditional men's spaces was a new twist, in the Syrian context as well as beyond it.<sup>817</sup> The "new

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<sup>816</sup> Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 54.

<sup>817</sup> Some of the aesthetics of the "new women" culture among Syrian American feminists had global roots, particularly the tendency for these feminists to select and borrow from an eclectic set of feminist figures and personalities. The women's press in Syrian New York (essentially 'Afifa Karam's newspaper, *al-'Alam al-Jadid*) presented and promoted images of the "modern woman" from American and European media, and incorporated

woman” idea was a potent mixture of ideas about Syrian femininity and the demands of the international women’s movement, also gaining steam in the 1920s. As a result, the idea tipped off the anxieties of Syrian and Lebanese nationalists who saw in the “new women” not only a threat to their movement but also the tinge of radicalism.

In the 1920s, Syrian and Lebanese feminists between New York City, Beirut, and Damascus wrote about a “new Syrian woman.” Educated, assertive, and ready to take on new public roles as worker, activist, and political agent, Syrian “new women” engaged American and international visions of gender equality, merging them with the early Arab feminist ideas of Qasim Amin and his contemporaries. Although the “new woman” as public figure was a creation of the 1920s, however, the terminology of new woman [*al-mar’a al-jadida*] was borrowed from Qasim Amin’s 1900 book, *The New Woman*, on women’s education and advancement in Islamic societies.<sup>818</sup> Credited as one of Egypt’s earliest Arab feminist writers, Amin’s was an elite and paternalistic feminism, aiming at women’s uplift through education in preparation for their roles as wives and mothers. Fighting patriarchy was not at issue so much as combating “traditional” practices that undermined women’s fulfillment of her social destiny. *The New Woman* was

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stories about both American feminist figures, presidential first ladies, and international organization humanitarian activists (the Red Cross and Near East Relief were recurrent favorites). Of the “modern girl,” Tani Barlow, Madeline Dong, Uta Poiger, et al argue that the topos of cosmopolitan modernity with youthful femininity was a prominent global flavor between 1910-1940; along with the first strides of the international women’s movement came an aesthetic culture (and a consumer market) for products which produced a “modern” femininity which bore its own racial hierarchical value system and had a close (if complicated) relationship with nationalism. One major departure between the Syrian American “new woman” and the “modern girl” analyzed by Barlow et al. is the continuing focus of Syrian feminists of chastity/purity and the redefinition of work (even factory work) as pure; the “modern girl,” by contrast, was fixated on feminine leisure with a taste of carefully marketed sensuality. While the form and aesthetic of both were similar, the content was at points quite distinct. See Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, Tani E. Barlow, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 10-3.

<sup>818</sup> See Muhammad Mustafa, *Qasim Amin: al-A’mal al-Kamila* (Cairo: Dar al-Sharq, 1989). Qasim Amin did not coin the term “new woman,” significantly. His “new woman” referred to the type of enlightened woman that Western societies produced, a result of advancements in girl’s education and a heightened degree of female status in personal status matters. Amin was simultaneously an Egyptian writer responding to debates regarding women taking place within Egypt and also an Egyptian writing in response to his knowledge about “new women” politics in Europe. For the latter, see Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed. *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, Drama of the 1890s* (Broadview Press, 2007).

Amin's second book, both a prescriptive text on maintaining a successful marriage (still seen as the primary goal of womanhood) but also pushing for advancements in women's matrimonial rights, in particular, protections from arbitrary unilateral divorce.<sup>819</sup> The goal of the "new woman," according to Amin, was the attentive rearing and education of children. The home and hearth became a site of progressive social and cultural reform.

In turn-of-the-century Egypt, in Beirut, and across the *mahjar*, Amin's new womanhood resonated most clearly with urban, educated, and elite- to middle-class women because it provided solutions to problems confronted by this class, namely, how to strike a new balance between older patterns of family honor within an emerging capitalist world economy that demanded women's participation.<sup>820</sup> At the same time, new womanhood soon spun into what feminist theorist Karen Offen calls "relational feminism," a middle-class variant that focuses on the reproductive couple and their kin as the locus for social change.<sup>821</sup> Through progressive, step-by-step advances in women's status within the context of the productive family unit, Syrian women could achieve a viable "equality in difference" as wives and mothers to the nation.<sup>822</sup> But by the 1920s, the concept of new womanhood was changing, and Syrian feminists calling to question the maintenance of boundaries between women's activism and mainstream (male) intellectual society as well as women's exclusions from public sites of cultural and political debate. If Amin saw the home as the place where the enlightened new woman "uplifted" society through raising, educating, and nurturing her children children, the "new women" of the 1920s ventured into the public, invoking her mandate to "civilize" society through her participation in

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<sup>819</sup> Juan Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn of the Century Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981), 393-4.

<sup>820</sup> Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn of the Century Egypt," 404-5.

<sup>821</sup> Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: a Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988), 138-9.

<sup>822</sup> Beth Baron, "Syrians and Mediators between East and West," *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 105-7.



the workplace, press-room, or playhouse beyond her household. As this section argues, the new woman's place changed after World War I, but at the same time, her special mandate – to enlighten, civilize, uplift – in many ways did not.

In New York City, Syrian women worked in textile and garment factories, in ethnic grocers, as weavers and peddlers, typically in employment systems that placed them entirely within female circles or in cloistered spaces managed by Syrian American “Brothers” companies (Sabbagh Brothers, Faour brothers, al-Khuri Brothers, and the ‘Arida Brothers companies all maintained offices in New York). Women's work was a fact of life. However, the liberal and professional trades, especially those seen as “public” or political remained, for the most part, closed to women. This was especially the case with print journalism, seen by Syrians and Lebanese in the diaspora as *the* major site of political debate and contest. Women who sought entry into the community's mainstream print culture risked being accused of usurping men's space; as Victoria Tannus described in 1924, “if you were to read a newspaper today, you would not find a single word from a woman. If you went to the printing house, you would not find a woman in its administration, and you will not find a woman's opinions or views expressed.”<sup>823</sup> Notable exceptions confirmed the rule: ‘Afifa Karam, who wrote regularly for *al-Huda*, *al-Akhlaq*, and other Syrian papers in New York, was herself deeply critical of women's general exclusion from the *mahjar*'s largest newspapers.<sup>824</sup>

At the same time, women who engaged in philanthropic committee-based activism also found themselves black-lettered if their activities were seen as usurping men's spaces, the press first among them. In 1919, for instance, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society submitted an appeal and a petition to the Syrian papers of New York City during the debates of the Paris Peace Conference.

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<sup>823</sup> Victoria Tannus, “al-Mar’a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa,” *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 22.

<sup>824</sup> Kallas, *al-Haraka al-Fikriyya al-Nisa'iyya*, 179.

Writing from Boston, a frustrated Hanna Sabbagh reported that none of the New York papers would print a public petition from a Ladies club. In the face of a media blackout, Sabbagh resolved to print her society's broadsides at her own expense, limiting both the scope and the distribution of her Society's message.<sup>825</sup> The Ladies Aid simultaneously decided against distributing a sizeable windfall of donations collected in early 1919 through the nationalist committee, preferring to remit cash payments directly to the Patriarchs of the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Melkite Churches instead.<sup>826</sup> What they did not send to the Churches, they remitted to women's organizations operating in Cairo and Beirut, reasserting the principle that women's philanthropy should serve women and remain autonomous from the goals of the nationalist committees (who were for most of 1919 concerned primarily with gaining influence at the Paris Peace Conference).<sup>827</sup>

Before World War I, most women who wanted to get into print worked within the women's periodicals, which emerged side-by-side with the mainstream political dailies, their editors operating a transnational press network that connected women's clubs in Beirut to Cairo, New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires. The most well-known women's syndicate before the

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<sup>825</sup> Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, *Mass.*) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 19 March 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. A few weeks later, Hanna Sabbagh would report with some irony that one of the New York newspapers had printed a letter by area Orthodox Bishop Mughabghab reporting that her Society's donations had been received in Damascus and were being employed to assist widows in the city; Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 1 July 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>826</sup> During the War, the Society typically recorded around \$15-20 in weekly donations for homeland relief. These increased to \$100-140 weekly in the weeks after the Armistice. In addition to payments made by Syrians in the United States, it appears that Near East Relief made payments to the Society during this period as well, for the upkeep of Syrian and Armenian women living in New York and Boston. Sabbagh does not make clear whether the decision to defer aid payments to *Lajnat Tahrir* was made by her Society alone or was a condition made by their partners at Near East Relief; her notes relate only that a "discussion about why we are not sending our monies to the owners of the newspapers" occurred, and that the Society made payments of \$50 to each Church that week. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society (Boston, *Mass.*) Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 25 February 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>827</sup> Records, 1917-2005; Meeting Minutes, 14 January 1919. MC 574, folder 1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

War was the one shared by Hind Nawfal's *al-Fatat*, established in Alexandria in 1892, Labiba Hashim's *Fatat al-Sharq* established in Cairo in 1906, *al-Fatat al-Lubnan* in Beirut, and 'Afifa Karam's New York City *al-'Alam al-Jadid*, founded in 1912.<sup>828</sup> These titles targeted both elite and middle class Syrian women, and eschewed overtly political discussions in favor of discussions about enlightenment, education, civilization, marriage and motherhood.<sup>829</sup> The women's press was, in Tannus's words, "the kitchen where new ideas bake and the fruits of debate can ripen and mature... (it) indicates the elevation of the people just as it inspires it. It is a school within which the common people learn without the discriminations of class, occupation, or sex."<sup>830</sup> These papers were, in other words, addressed to the "new women" cut from Qasim Amin's nineteenth century cloth. With the entry of women (and more specifically, working women activists) into the politics of World War I, however, the concerns of the women's magazines shifted. If women were to participate in building the nation, what consigned that work to the private space of the home? If the newspaper was the nation's loquacious mouthpiece, surely it became women's responsibility to ensure its language was correct?

After the War, the gender segregation of the Syrian American newspaper industry was a major bone of contention between "new woman" Syrian feminists and the male editors of the *mahjar*. Feminist writers began demanding that the political presses in New York City include women's voices, framing women's inclusion as an extension of their mandate to uplift society as a whole. *al-Akhlaq*, founded by Ya'qub Rufa'il (a member of the *Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-*

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<sup>828</sup> Kallas, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Nisawiyya*, 16-7; 25. In 1914, Salwa Salamah Atlas and her husband Jurj founded *al-Karma* in São Paulo, Brazil. Although it began as a political monthly with the standard fare of homeland politics, educational writings, and discussions about local philanthropic societies, Salwa Atlas also regularly reproduced writings from the women's newspapers across this network. After Jurj's death in 1923, Salwa took over *al-Karma*'s production and the periodical more thoroughly integrated female authors and discussions of women's issues.

<sup>829</sup> Kallas, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Nisawiyya*, 39; Baron, "Rethinking Work and the Family," *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 144-6.

<sup>830</sup> Victoria Tannus, "al-Mir'a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa," *al-Akhlaq* January 1924, 16.

*Lubnaniyya* and a contemporary of Na'um Mukarzil) in 1921, was the first major serial to thoroughly integrate female columnists and editors and address itself to both men and women in the *mahjar*.<sup>831</sup> As such, it quickly became one of the first titles where Syrian American feminists debated the merits of women's work, social activism, and advancements in the public sphere.

"The press," Victoria Tannus wrote in 1924, "is the robust niche where nations are established. It is where the world becomes civilized... the journalist is a leader of public opinion [*al-ra'i al-'am*]. But in the minds of his readers he is also a teacher, cultured and well-mannered."<sup>832</sup> In an article detailing the history of the Syrian women's press, Tannus argued that the inclusion of women's voices in the mainstream political papers of New York served to strengthen the unity and cohesiveness of the nation as a unit. "A truly sophisticated press not only relays political news and daily events," she claimed, but also "diagnoses and treats social ills," shaping ideas and elevate entire societies. The labors of cultural elevation, education, and cultivation, she continued, had been for centuries considered women's work, performed inside the family home within a woman's network of family and kin relationships. The creation of the newspaper press, a modern phenomenon, had wrongfully excluded women from social discourse they had long been a part of since the pristine "golden age" [*'usur al-salaf*] of Eastern civilizations. Tannus joined her historical argument with the developmentalist rhetoric seen in her nationalist contemporaries: "only poor countries exclude some individuals from participating."<sup>833</sup> She also invokes the logic, seen elsewhere, that working women labor in the interest of their entire family, "(although) newspapers are like other kinds of employment, most of us view with favor a woman who helps her husband if circumstances necessitate it. The

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<sup>831</sup> In 1923, Sallum Mukarzil purchased *al-Akhlaq*, although Rufa'il seems to have retained full editorship of the paper through the 1920s.

<sup>832</sup> Tannus, "al-Mir'a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa," 16.

<sup>833</sup> Tannus, "al-Mir'a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa," 17.

female journalist is no different... How can you prohibit a woman from the press if its call to arms is obligatory?”<sup>834</sup> Finally, she compared the Syrian American press with its mainstream American counterpart, which had made strides in incorporating larger numbers of female columnists, printers, and editors. As for the Syrian press in New York? “one woman among a thousand editors is not sufficient... a sophisticated press does not divide its participants” but considers the merit of their ideas.<sup>835</sup>

Gender parity, the press as women’s work, and the “uplifting” power of womanhood each found their way into Tannus’s article. Additionally, though, Tannus argued that “the women’s Arabic press (in America) has had more success in dialogue with its American counterpart” than the mainstream Arabic dailies, and that Syrian women as a whole had done a better job of connecting with American organizations laboring to improve immigrant conditions in New York City. Whereas men’s papers eschewed local politics in favor of reporting on the homeland (“remaining wholly ignorant of events in the American press”), the women’s journals had dutifully explored contemporary American social issues, studying American culture as a means towards cultural revitalization. Women journalists therefore brought not only their perspectives, but also connections and expertise. By capitalizing on these contributions, the Syrian American press stood only to gain. Tannus’s concludes by granting advice to aspiring feminist writers: “So, the advice I offer to my sisters, young educated women, is do not shy away from your writing or from work in the public press. And to young female journalists, consider this the work of hearts... your daily sacrifice for the success of your husbands.”<sup>836</sup>

As the most important site for transnational public discourse, the press presented the most

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<sup>834</sup> Tannus, “al-Mir’a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa,” 18.

<sup>835</sup> Tannus, “al-Mir’a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa,” 16-8.

<sup>836</sup> Tannus, “al-Mir’a al-Suriyya wa-l-Sihafa,” 18.

important intellectual space that Syrian American feminists sought entry into. But contests over other sorts of public spaces also occurred, particularly over places linked to artistic or political expression like theatres, cafes, and concert forums. Mirroring discussions about the press, debates over women's access to such spaces occurred across transnational space and depended on women's capacity to uplift society through her presence. In 1923, for instance, the municipal government of Beirut drafted a series of laws prohibiting women from entering public "spaces of corruption," defined as the cinema, gambling parlors, music halls, and gentlemen's clubs. Citing public as well as moral health, the ordinance turned on the logic that women's primary social obligations were the advancement and progress of Lebanese morality and character; by outlawing women's presence in immoral public spaces, the law left them free to do their civilizing work. Writing to the Beirut women's magazine *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* from New York, 'Afifa Karam pointed out the irony of a state that surveilled its women in order to civilize its men: "Why is it the government's duty to know about and nanny its own people? (Is it) to rule the restless nation, pushing to advance it beyond its stumbling blocks?"<sup>837</sup> Karam insisted that Lebanese women had the right to privacy, and continued that by banning women from the cinema, the city government was actually hindering women's education and acculturation. For all its self-representation as a "civilized government," (*al-hukuma al-mutamaddina*), Karam wryly concluded, the Beirut municipality was exercising a pretty backwards approach. She asked why the educated men of Beirut could not find their own way out of these "places of villainy, corruption, and dirty habits" without their wives standing outside the threshold.<sup>838</sup>

As might be expected, Karam's indictment of the Beirut municipality on behalf of the "new women" of the *mahjar* caused a stirring of debate among nationalists as well as between

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<sup>837</sup> 'Afifa Karam, "Hadith al-Mahjar: Mumnu'a al-Dahkul," *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* vol. 3, no 12, December 1923, 437.

<sup>838</sup> Karam, "Hadith al-Mahjar: Mumnu'a al-Dahkul," 437-8.

feminists of all varieties. On one hand, the law policed and restricted women's movements; on the other, it did so with the advancement of the nation in mind. Even notable nationalists normally sympathetic to the feminist movement responded to Karam with ire. Writing from Cairo, for example, *al-Ahram* contributor and prominent Syrian intellectual Salim Sarkis responded to Karam's ideas by attacking the feminism of "new women" as a threat to the social order:

"Here is the primary difference between the 'new woman' and myself: you are seeking to be permitted from (adhering to) certain restrictions, and I want to maintain those restrictions." ... "Why are you a slave, I a master, and family life a curse upon humanity (and none of this is doubted)? ... Our social system requires the presence of a (household) head as well as a subordinate; you know this is so in both the family and the nation."<sup>839</sup>

Sarkis showed sympathy for the allure of the new international feminism, but he argued that it was never men who oppressed women; rather, the functioning of the political order depended on women's subordination. Indeed, Sarkis argued that women's subordination was condoned by biology, "it is impossible to change the natural order, and its requisites are that you are to be wives and mothers. You are companions to your husbands, and servants of your children, whether you like it or not."<sup>840</sup>

Sarkis accused the Karam and the "new woman" feminists of hazarding cultural mimicry and implored "do not abandon all that is old and cling to all that is new." He asked Muslim women to maintain their veils; from Christian women, he warned against "becoming westernized" [*tatafarnaji*] under the cultural weight of the French Mandate.<sup>841</sup> Drawing on the

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<sup>839</sup> Salim Sarkis, "Ila Ibnat Baladi," *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* 4, no. 1, January 1924, 378-9. Sarkis' article was also written in discussion with a monthly column of the same name written by *al-Mara'a al-Jadida* editor Julia Dimashqiyya. Dimashqiyya's column tackled issues like the need for legal reform to advance women's social position, a woman's right to engage in public debates and in public spaces, and advancements in women's education especially. Dimashqiyya printed Sarkis's letter in place of her own January 1924 column to fuel debate among her feminist readers and as a demonstration of the sort of opposition her publication saw regularly. See Julia Dimashqiyya, "Ila Ibnat Baladi," *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* 3, no. 1, January 1923, 1-2.

<sup>840</sup> Sarkis, "Ila Ibnat Baladi," 379.

<sup>841</sup> Sarkis, "Ila Ibnat Baladi," 379.

stereotype of the unmarried feminist radical, Sarkis requested that women activists who “have ‘liberated’ themselves from marital slavery” seek not to divide the nation with feminist causes. Instead, female activists should “become a man’s companion in the national family [*dawlat al-‘a’ila*]” laboring in service to its advancement. At the same time, Sarkis concluded:

“Do not ask to participate in shouldering all of a man’s official responsibilities. Do not try to be the queen bee [*malikat al-nahl*] who has no valuable work, husband, or roost to rule over. For even that queen bee is actually a provisional servant to others.”<sup>842</sup>

In Sarkis’s estimation, women’s activism was welcome, and women’s advancement a desirable goal. But his vision of national progress depended on women assuming a complementary, subordinate status, and he read Karam’s attack on patriarchy as an attempt to win women’s liberation at the expense of the national whole. “I do not want you to be constrained by slavery,” Sarkis relayed to Karam, “I want you to be free, but will your attainments reach the nation as well as your sex? Will all individuals win their freedom at once?”<sup>843</sup>

Nationalist anxieties about the “new women” feminists dividing the ranks often spilled into patriarchal anxieties about what feminist politics would do to the Syrian American household. Some in the New York colony saw Syrian American feminism as a troubling mixture of modernist fetishism and radical politics, pushing into men’s spaces while chaos crept into the home. These tensions became most pronounced around feminists continuing insistence that social uplift was their goal: caricatures of “new women” feminists reveal mounting concerns about young working women simultaneously as mothers and radicals. A 1923 cartoon from *al-Akhlaq* dramatized the pitfalls of the “modern” Syrian family in ironic contrast. Presented alongside an article questioning the virtues of “advancing” Syrian motherhood along the lines of

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<sup>842</sup> Sarkis, “Ila Ibnat Baladi,” 379.

<sup>843</sup> Sarkis, “Ila Ibnat Baladi,” 379.



Western style institutions like romantic love, the nuclear family, and the rigorous training of small children in the moral culture of the *nahda*, the cartoon portrayed a husband reclining after a long day of work. His infant son plays on the living room floor as his wife tends to the kitchen nearby. The husband is interrupted from reading his newspaper when his infant son simultaneously breaks a vase and pulls the family cat's tail. Calling his wife into the room, he quips, "It appears, Hannah, that you were frequently reading Bolshevik books before you placed this child here, who is disturbing our comfort."<sup>844</sup> The cartoon pokes fun at the mother's influence over her children; her inculcation of, in this case, radical ideas in her son backfires when the child decides to declare a revolution against peaceful tranquility and the family pet.



Figure 18: February 1923 Cartoon from *al-Akhlaq*. Anxieties about women's supposed flirtations with radical politics (especially "Bolshevism") as seen here) merged into concerns about Syrian motherhood.

The cartoon reveals male apprehensions about women's dual roles as raisers of children and modernizers of Syrian national culture. By promoting a nationalist vision of Syrian womanhood as contributing to the reproduction and inculcation of a respectable patriotic culture, women had been empowered with delivering the message to the next generation. The private space of the home was re-envisioned as a political space, the act of motherhood itself transformed into a patriotic endeavor. But as Syrian American women made advances into the public sphere while

simultaneously retaining firm female control over the home, the purported radical leanings of the

<sup>844</sup> "al-Ibn Yansha' 'ala ma-kan Walidihi," *al-Akhlaq* February 1923, 22.

modern woman has created chaos, not progress. The received wisdom that “sons take after their fathers” (written above the panel) is put to mockery, as this son had clearly personifies his mother's “chaotic” political proclivities.

Although the civilizing qualities of the “new woman” played a significant part in debates between Syrian American feminists and provided a powerful critique against the paternalism of the nationalist movement and its ideologies, there were also those who questioned women's mandate to “uplift” Syrian society. Particularly among younger Syrian American feminists born in the United States, the model of the civilizing, patriotic mother proved less compelling and risked trapping the feminist movement into constant self-justification. The same generation gap which divided old from young during the relief efforts of the War manifested itself in debates over women's roles in upholding social morals, leading to new diagnoses for Syria's social ills.

A 1923 public debate between young Syrian feminist Victoria Tannus and her older contemporary Amira Jamal al-Hilu is instructive. In an *al-Akhlaq* article called “A Child Cries,” al-Hilu described a dramatized interaction with a Syrian street urchin on Washington Street (shari' washintun, al-hayy al-suri). Al-Hilu approaches the young boy, around 3 years old, wipes a tear from his face and asks why he is crying. “I am hungry,” the child says, “the door (to my house) is locked, and my mother is at the textile factory (*al-fabirka*) working.” al-Hilu indicted young Syrian mothers for shirking their primary obligations to their children: to provide shelter, safety, good food, and a proper moral education.<sup>845</sup> Hilu argued that while women's work was not forbidden, her most honorable labor remained at home, raising her children in a progressive manner. A lonely child crying on the street was a sign of a failed womanhood; if given the choice between wage-work and motherhood, Hilu emphatically concluded that stay-at-home mothers

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<sup>845</sup> Amira Jamal Faylun al-Hilu, “Tifl Yabki,” *al-Akhlaq* May 1923, 15.

committed “the highest sacrifice and self-love,” and ultimately did more for society than their wage-earning contemporaries.<sup>846</sup>

Skeptical of a feminist model that shunted all social progress to the shoulder of working mothers, young Victoria Tannus wrote back in outrage that Hilu had neglected to tell “both halves” of the story. Tannus “do(es) not deny the sanctity of motherhood,” but says that she too encountered the crying child moments after Hilu passed by. Her discussion with the toddler went more like this:

“Where is your mother?”

“At the *fabirka*.”

“Well then, where is your father?”

(“between sobs, the child exclaims”) “Why, he’s at the café!”<sup>847</sup>

Tannus then asked her female readers, “does it do us justice to take a social guilt upon ourselves as individuals?” By absolving Syrian men of their responsibility to maintain an active family life, Syrian women not only mislaid the blame for the disintegration of Syrian American families, but they also wound up becoming sole family caretakers. “Sure,” Tannus continued, “there are (working mothers) who do not provide the necessary love and nurturance, but for every one of those, there are a thousand Syrian women who work as both mother and father!”<sup>848</sup>

Tannus inverted Hilu’s expectation that women be of higher moral character and provide a moral compass for the nuclear family household by asserting a new hypothesis for familial disorder: perhaps men, not women, had shirked their household duties! Tannus’s Syrian mother labored at the textile factory, “seated over hot machines with none but God for company” before rushing home to prepare supper. Meanwhile, her husband spent the day carousing with his male company at the café, playing backgammon, smoking *narghile*, and reciting *zajal*. When he found

<sup>846</sup> Via Victoria Tannus, “Tifl yabki,” *al-Akhlaq* June 1923, 12.

<sup>847</sup> Tannus, “Tifl Yabki,” 12.

<sup>848</sup> Tannus, “Tifl Yabki,” 12.

his way home to sit down to his meal, he complained roundly that his coffee was sour, he had lost his game, and “things in the homeland are not as they ought to be.”<sup>849</sup> The crying child, Tannus concluded, lamented Syrian men’s refusal to rise to the challenges of modern American life just as much as they missed their absent mother. Tannus mocked the men’s café, depicted by political fraternities as the primary site for patriotic politics and nationalist activism, as a silly place of nostalgia, worshipful idleness, and loose values. She attacked not only women’s exclusion from these places; she openly questioned their social value and political relevance.

*Conclusion: The Mahjar and the International Women’s Movement*

This chapter has framed the development of a “new woman” Syrian American feminism in greater New York City amid the tensions, anxieties, and debates between two activist movements. Syrian working women, young mothers, and emerging feminist intellectuals found themselves pulled between the maternalist politics of long-distance nationalisms (whether Syrian or Lebanese) and an increasingly internationalized women’s movement. In the 1920s, the face of the “new woman” changed in important ways: although she remained undeniable preoccupied with the “modern” way of life, her modernity was progressively appended to her identity as a worker and active public figure acting in the social good. In turn, feminist demands for more participation in the workplace, improved access to the press and other sites of public display and discourse, and a revised role in the household challenged the paternalism of the nationalist movement in the *mahjar*. Women like Victoria Tannus challenged nationalist patriarchy, mocked the places seen as sacrosanct to patriotic masculinity, and called to question whether men were living up to the challenges of true Syrian American modernity. It is of little wonder that such ideas were often called radical by their opponents, that the “new women” were seen as divisive

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<sup>849</sup> Tannus, “Tifl Yabki,” 12.

upstarts, tainted by the internationalist politics of the garment factory floor.

But *was* she a radical? Despite that some nationalists equated women's activism to a radical agenda, it does not appear as though the Syrian American "new woman" feminism discussed here was actually so. These feminists were, however, intrigued by and sometimes connected with the international women's movement taking off in the 1920s. In the 1920s, 'Afifa Karam popularized the International Congress of Women as an example of how women could organize across national lines to better the circumstances of all. In *al-Mar'a al-Jadida*, for instance, she wrote the ICW's history, describing its first convention at the Hague in 1915 "as women collectively speaking to the men of politics" to end World War I.<sup>850</sup> Although in reality the ICW was at the outset an organization "divided by nationality and often fiercely loyal to different organizations," its members, predominantly elite women from the Allied nations, devised an internationalist notion of "universal sisterhood," a collective activist identity rooted in women's difference from men.<sup>851</sup> By the 1920s, furthermore, non-European elite voices helped to define this notion of sisterhood: Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'rawi proclaimed at an ICW meeting in 1923, for instance, that "if men's ambition has created war, the sentiment of equity, innate in women, will further the construction of peace."<sup>852</sup> Karam argued that contrary the appeals of nationalists that women cooperate with the paternalist vision of the national "family," the key to national progress lay instead in women's ability to override men's "natural" proclivities towards conflict, violence, and War. For Karam, organizing with the ICW was a means of preserving a peace through women's work. Announcing her support for the ICW and related organizations she

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<sup>850</sup> 'Afifa Karam, "'Usba al-Umm al-Nisa'iyya: li-Ajl al-Salam wa-l-Hurriyya,'" in *al-Mar'a al-Jadida*, January 1923, 31. Michael Suleiman Collection, Box 139, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI.

<sup>851</sup> Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: the Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 1, 83-4.

<sup>852</sup> As cited in Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 84; Huda Sha'rawi, "L'Orient et l'Occident en Cooperation," *Le République* 20 April 1935, Corbett Ashby Papers, box 484, Fawcett Library.

appealed to her readers to “take advantage of the window of opportunity and search with us for the way to a new peace. Don’t forget those examples (of our work) from the days of the War. Work, and struggle, before the troops arrive.”<sup>853</sup>

Karam’s notion of universal sisterhood joined Syrian American feminists to American and European collaborators as well as to “sisters left behind” (*ibnat baladi al-mutakhallifa*) in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>854</sup> Shortly after declaring her support of ICW, Karam addressed Syrian women in particular, asking “Is there more between you and your sister abroad than vast expanses of water?”... “(they are) grateful for freedom and democracy, and they endeavor for the same for you.” In one of her most controversial addresses, Karam invoked the port at Beirut, that site of maritime connectivity that brought Lebanon manufactured goods, cash remittances from abroad, and according to Karam, the progressive political benefits of modern democracy. She challenges women in the homeland to labor for women’s social advancement, defined by her as more equitable access to public spaces, politics, and employment. “I extend a hand across the oceans,” Karam concluded, “but this hand does not carry an eloquent pen all by itself. Nor does it work for its own benefit.” Karam’s challenge bore fruit by way of women’s activism (a Beirut women’s organization affiliated with *al-Mar’a al-Jadida*, called *Jama’at al-Sayyidat*, reported a boost in membership and donations in the weeks that followed),<sup>855</sup> but it also generated a stream of criticism. Many Lebanese women, even ardent feminists critical of the paternalist social order of the early French Mandate, took issue with Karam’s characterization of the homeland as living in ignorant slavishness to centuries old traditions.<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>853</sup> Karam, “‘Usba al-Umm al-Nisa’iyya,” 31.

<sup>854</sup> ‘Afifa Karam, “Hadith al-Mahjar,” *al-Mar’a al-Jadida*, February 1923, 52-3. Michael Suleiman Collection, Box 139, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI.

<sup>855</sup> “al-Jama’a al-Sayyidat,” *al-Mar’a al-Jadida*, March 1923, 99-100.

<sup>856</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 158.

Although Syrian American connections to the ICW appear to have been intellectual rather than practical, the international women's movement influenced Syrian American feminists in meaningful ways, including how they interacted with the homeland. But despite pop images of the "radical" new women and nationalist anxieties about divisions from within, Syrian American feminist did not target the nationalist movement itself as the problem. Women like al-Hilu, Karam, Tannus, and others saw Syrian women's participation in the international women's movement in two registers, simultaneously as *Syrians* and as *women*. Ultimately, their goal was national progress and social development, defined in ways marginally distinct from those of the émigré nationalists of New York. The biggest distinction was in attitudes towards women's work, long a fact of life in both the homeland in the *mahjar*. Writing on national identity and women's work in 1920, 'Afifa Karam argued that if Phoenician blood flowed through the veins of male merchants, shippers, and traders, did it not also color the blood of Syrian women?

"The Syrian woman is perhaps the best suited as a trader, perhaps as much so as her Phoenician grandfather that came to these American lands (and ruled them) before Columbus' arrival... did she not also emigrate from her land? Did she board the steamship, feeling the sense of purpose that sent men abroad?"<sup>857</sup>

Phoenician heritage, centuries old and "shared by both sexes," joined together with the experience of emigration to explain women's entrepreneurial spirit. Recognizing women's abilities and the importance of her work was critical for national progress. The invisibility of women workers was not merely a feminist issue; it was a nationalist one, "to those men who say 'what woman (are you speaking of)?' I say 'that one, working next to her man in his market, or that one whose wages helped him open it.'" And the net result of women's work, in Karam's estimation?

"Most of us will recall that common saying uttered by our civilized men (*rijalina*

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<sup>857</sup> 'Afifa Karam, "al-Muhajira ka-l-Tajira," *al-Akhlaq* August 1920, 7.

*al-mutaqaddimin*) that ‘the (Syrian) women in America behave better than the men,’ (because) the women work for the benefit of our brothers and sisters... and at the same time, she does not return as herself; the times and their virtues have impressed themselves upon her.’<sup>858</sup>

By warding off poverty (which in other articles Karam equated as a “national illness,” a social ill that produced ignorance) as well as being privy to the “civilizing benefits” of the shop-room floors of America, emigrant woman workers were both pioneers and patriots. For all of her international connections – to the labor movement, the women’s movements, or to international humanitarian organizations – hers was a labor in service to her nation. Removing “the yoke of several centuries worth of oppression” from her shoulders was not a reversal of the goals of the nationalist movement; it was, in the eyes of the new women, a means for “restoring our civilization” by righting historical wrongs.<sup>859</sup> By maintaining a feminist foundation that framed the Syrian “new woman” within a civilizational struggle (rather than a struggle for rights against the patriarchal dictates of the nationalist movement), both Syrian American feminists and their partners in the homeland distinguished themselves from the so-called “radical” elements of the international women’s movement.<sup>860</sup> “When we speak of the ‘new woman’ (*al-mar’a al-jadida*) or ‘enlightened woman’ (*al-mar’a al-nahida*),” concluded the educator and feminist Julia Dimashqiyya in Beirut, “we do not mean the manly woman who shouts loud from Europe or America, where she demands for rights taken from her; such women are not enlightened (*al-nahida*); rather, they embody folly.”<sup>861</sup> Whatever the misgivings of some nationalists about the *mahjar*’s “new women,” her goals remained very much in line with the nationalist project of the

<sup>858</sup> Karam, “al-Muhajira ka-l-Tajira,” 7.

<sup>859</sup> ‘Afifa Karam, “Tahta al-Nir,” *al-Akhlaq* March 1921, 5.

<sup>860</sup> Although, as Leila Rupp argues, the “internationalism” of the international women’s movement in the 1920s was less radical than its opponents claimed. Instead, many feminist activists adhered to a vision of “universal sisterhood” organized within the framework of multinationalism (as representatives of their respective nations coming together); Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 85.

<sup>861</sup> Julia Dimashqiyya, “al-Mar’a al-Nahida,” *al-Akhlaq* February 1923, 4.



1920s: “the woman, just like the man, is responsible for developing her intellect, enlightening her mind and heart together.” What distinguished her struggle was that in addition to civilizing and developing the nation, these feminists also undertook to “free both (mind and heart) from the yoke of man that weighed heavy on her predecessors' necks.”<sup>862</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> Dimashqiyya, “al-Mar’a al-Nahida,” 4.

## CONCLUSION: ONE *MAHJAR*, MANY NATIONS: ISSUES IN DEFINING POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN CONTESTED TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

This dissertation has defined *al-mahjar* (literally “the place of emigration”) as a transnational discursive and activist space where Ottoman Syrian emigrants in the Americas conducted commerce, organized philanthropic and political committees, and debated nationalist ideas with one another through a shared set of institutions linking their communities in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires. Historians also widely translate *mahjar* as “diaspora,” a choice which reflects the word’s modern usage and invokes a sense of shared history and ethnic culture shared by Syrian and Lebanese emigrants living abroad as well as their enduring connectivities with the homeland. But “mahjar” and “diaspora” are not exactly coeval terms, nor do they translate cleanly. As historians and social theorists debate the connotations of the word *diaspora*, working them into a working definition which connotes the disruptions of dispersal, a shared collective memory of home, and the expectation (or mythology) of return, Syrian and Lebanese experiences in the Americas look less like a truly “diasporic” ones.

Instead, this dissertation presents the interwar *mahjar* as a contested transnational space, a place where activists competed with one another over the political future of their communities, recently (and contentiously) defined in national terms. It argues that World War I granted politicized Syrians and Lebanese living in the Americas unprecedented access to the politics of their homeland. Although touting political visions very much at odds with one another, these emigrant activists consequently appear not as exiles but as “Syrians abroad” who continued to travel to, conduct business with, and organize politically in relation to home. After the war and through the 1920s, furthermore, *mahjari* Syrians and Lebanese positioned themselves as transnational citizens abroad, generating a transnational pattern of participatory, substantive citizenship which demanded recognition and services from the French mandatory state. Whether

in confirmation of this status (in the case of Lebanon) or in opposition to it (in Syria), the idea that emigrants were a part of the national community and its citizen body was confirmed by the French Mandatory state, albeit incompletely so. The *mahjar*, furthermore, was a place of sojourn, not a site of permanent displacement; upwards of half of the Syrians and Lebanese who emigrated to the Americas eventually return to the Mashriq, either permanently or before once again alighting to points abroad.<sup>863</sup> “The homeland” was not a distant point rooted in historical memory (or even in the past); these emigrants maintained personal and political lives that spanned dynamically between Mashriq and *mahjar*.

With those points in mind, Syrian communities in the Americas are perhaps more fruitfully thought of as *frontiers*, *borderlands*, or transnational *suburbs* than as part of a yawning diaspora. I argue that thinking about the Syrian communities of the Americas as a transnational political geography opens a means to more closely integrate the *mahjar*’s history with that of the Mashriq, perhaps even transnationalizing eastern Mediterranean history in the modern period. But such a transnational goal must be justified by the presence of empirical evidence—in this case, the existence of networks of individuals traversing the space between Syria, Lebanon, and the Americas (both North and South). Tracing these networks, mapping these connections has been the principle theoretical aim of this work. But the existence of the networks aside, how and when were they most politically significant in relation to the homeland? Why did emigrants, their politics, and their ideas ‘matter’ during World War I and the decade which followed? What mechanisms assisted the diaspora’s press, political parties, and the emigrant leadership into international relevance? And perhaps most critically, did this moment pass? Certain historical

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<sup>863</sup> Kohei Hashimoto estimates that between 1926 and 1933, around 41 percent of Syrian and Lebanese emigrants returned to the Mashriq, whether temporarily or permanently. Hashimoto, “Lebanese Population Movements,” *Lebanese in the World*, 66n. Akram Khater also estimates that up to half of emigrants in the Americas were temporary sojourners, Khater, *Inventing Home*, 110.

contingencies—war, geopolitical considerations, and the emigrants’ ability to fit themselves within the aims of the powers of the Entente—created a transnational situation that, while perhaps more common than “methodologically nationalist” historiography allows, was nonetheless quite extraordinary.

The diaspora’s political significance was to a large degree a product of the disintegration of Syrian political society and institutions during World War I. As Cemal Pasha dismantled the press, banned reform groups, and prosecuted Syrian decentralists and Arabist thinkers, the diaspora became the premier site for voices of the Arabophone opposition. In some cases, the linkage between Cemal Pasha’s repression and emigration was clear: those Syrian journalists not hanged by his government in May 1916 fled mostly to Egypt, but also to the Americas, where they continued their political activities, often in collaboration with the Great Powers.<sup>864</sup> The CUP’s clampdown on the Syrian press at home contributed to the proliferation of political newspapers abroad, which during World War I saw a boom in both the number of titles available and the numbers of subscribers. Cemal Pasha’s governorate was concerned enough about Syrian newspaper printed abroad that he screened them closely at Ottoman ports. When their content turned decidedly against his rule in 1916, he banned their importation outright.<sup>865</sup>

The political committees which emerged abroad during the War were not only organizationally fecund, putting down roots across the *mahjar*; they also presented space for

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<sup>864</sup> A French diplomatic document enumerates men subpoenaed by Cemal Pasha’s government but who fled the Empire instead. Among them, Ayyub Tabet (New York City, President of *Lajna Tahrir Suriya wa-Lubnan*); Khalil Zeine (Cairo); Michel Nakhle (“Tueni”) (Alexandria); Rizkallah Arcache (Cairo). Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, Guerre 1914-1918, Turquie (henceforth MAE, T), LeFevre-Pontalis to Briand, Cairo, 12 April 1916. Antoine Hokayem, Daad Bou Malhab ‘Atallah, and Jean Charaf, *Documents diplomatiques Français relatifs à l’histoire du Liban et de la Syrie à l’époque du mandat, Vol. 1: Le Démantèlement de l’Empire Ottoman et les préludes du mandat* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2003), 132-133.

<sup>865</sup> M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha’s Governorate during World War I, 1914-1917* (London: Routledge, 2014), 94-5.

political action and participation in ways that were increasingly suppressed in Damascus and Beirut. While varied in their ideological orientations and nationalist outlooks, the committees abroad also provided space for negotiation with the Entente Powers during the War. As this research shows, the relationship between emigrant politics and the Entente was one of the most significant ways that the diaspora “came home” to the Mashriq through politics, even to the expense of Syrians and Lebanese still living in the homeland. Long-distance nationalist politics came home in 1919 and 1920, particularly in Lebanon, where long-distance Lebanese nationalists brought the French Mandate “home” with them. But if the long-distance nationalists’ complex series of entanglements with the Entente (especially but not exclusively with the French) helped usher in the Syrian and Lebanese Mandates, emigrant politics also influenced the early development of the Mandate states, particularly with regards to the Lebanese census of 1921 and the politics of obtaining (or opposing) Syrian and Lebanese nationality laws. The Mandate’s expansion of state power through educational, philanthropic, and administrative policies designed to bring the state into direct interaction with its citizen body (what Elizabeth Thompson calls the “colonial civic order”) is clearly seen in the ways that the Mandate’s consular officers abroad interacted with Syrian and Lebanese emigrants.<sup>866</sup> In turn, these emigrants framed themselves as transnational citizens of the homeland, regardless of their actual legal status or whether they supported or opposed French rule.

*Syrian (or Lebanese) in Times of Crisis: the Mahjar’s Shifting Political Relevance*

If the *mahjar* sat at the vanguard of the Mashriq’s nationalist politics during the World War, and if emigrants were among those counted by the League of Nations in 1919 or by the French in 1921, these voices became progressively more muted during the late 1920s. By the

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<sup>866</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1.

beginning of the 1930s, emigrant nationalists continued to reach out to their homeland compatriots but with a much more tempered degree of success. Why? First, by the late 1920s, the historical juncture that brought the *mahjar* to prominence was passing. World War I in the Mashriq saw the destruction of the Ottoman governorate of Syria and the imposition of an imperial French administration in its footprint. During the 1920s, the Mandate states in Syria and Lebanon sought to condition the state-society relationship in ways that minimized local opposition, to varying degrees of success. In Lebanon, the French High Commissioner established the Representative Council in 1922, a parliamentary structure that was later codified in the Lebanese 1926 Constitution. Although its legislative powers were attenuated by the strong executive power of the Presidency (and the Lebanese President's own powers were attenuated by French authorities, who retained the right to dissolve the government and suspend the Constitution), the emergence of representative institutions in Lebanon prompted Lebanese participation within the Mandatory system as opposed to rebellion against it. In Syria, the outbreak of the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925 prompted the French towards military solutions; counterinsurgency, not representative government, consumed the Mandate's attention until 1927. But quickly after the revolt's suppression, France found new (albeit ambivalent) partners through the creation of quasi-representative structures centered on Damascus. The Constitutive Assembly, then the Syrian National Bloc, stressed cooperation with the Mandate in the name of constitutional and national development by 1928. Reform, not revolt, was the preferred means of dealing with the Mandates at home.

Grand shifts in the *mahjar*'s political significance *vis a vis* the homeland suggest that the diaspora mattered most in times of crisis, war, and rebellion. The *mahjar*'s Lebanese nationalists took the vanguard in working with the French Foreign Ministry during and immediately after

World War I, and helped map the greater Lebanese state. When in 1920 it was revealed that many of the new “Lebanese” residents of the *Grand Liban* opposed the project, the *mahjar* became a critical demographic source for the Mandate’s first census. But although the French took measures to incorporate Lebanese emigrants into the Lebanese body politic through the extension of consulate, nationality, and optional citizenship, there was never a subsequent project to ensure their participation in the confessional, constitutional system they helped construct. Once the Lebanese Republic emerged, and dissenting voices more or less contained, the Mandate did not reach out to the *mahjar* as consistently as it had during the 1917-1925 period.

The Syrian case illustrates this point even more strikingly; Arab nationalists in the *mahjar* participated vigorously in the Arab Revolt of 1916-1918 as well as the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927. During the world war, Arab nationalists in the Americas raised funding, circulated petitioned, and attempted to broker the United States’ support for Emir Faysal’s Syrian project, and in 1925, nationalist parties centered in Argentina organized demonstrations and sought to bring international attention to the imperialistic nature of France’s Syrian Mandate. When these efforts failed, the *Hizb al-Istiqlal* of Buenos Aires funneled money to the Syrian revolutionaries at home. When the tone of Syrian nationalist politics “at home” tempered under the Syrian National Bloc in 1928, the Arab nationalists in the *mahjar* became highly critical; for them, armed insurgency and mass revolution were the most valid pathways to independence. But by the end of the decade (and especially once the National Bloc got its Syrian Constitution in 1930) the firebrand voices of the diaspora found themselves increasingly speaking to one another, not the homeland. All in all, there was a close correlation between crisis and revolt in the homeland and the political significance of emigrant activists. While this correlation is not determinative of connectivities beyond the interwar period, it certainly holds true during the two

decades between the fall of the Ottoman government and the emergence of constitutional systems under French imperial management.

Although the war presented long-distance nationalists with an unprecedented opportunity to affect political change in their homeland, there emerged alongside these movements a pervasive culture of criticism of nationalists, both by Ottoman loyalists and by everyday emigrants who doubted the viability of the national model within the multi-religious, multiethnic framework of Ottoman Syria. This “politics of doubt” gained steam through the 1920s, particularly among the younger generation coming of age in a transnational, multilingual setting and who increasingly did not desire a return to French Mandate Syria and Lebanon. Traces of emigrant disgust with the long-distance nationalist culture of the *mahjar* appear in this research: in Amin al-Rihani’s wartime insistence that he was “Syrian Lebanese”, in ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jizawi’s sharp silence to Julio Atlas’ questions about Syrian patriotism, and in Victoria Tannus’s mocking of the men’s cafes. Each individual saw nationalism as a limiting ideology, a divisive idea poorly suited to the ideals of unity and development it claimed were its ends. Such images of doubt, criticism, and skepticism found themselves into the *mahjar*’s public sphere during the twenties, often sitting uncomfortably in the pages of the nationalists’ political press. Although this research has focused on emigrant nationalism as a transnational project, mode of activism, and political culture, the interwar period was also a time of mounting critique of nationalism as a means of accomplishing progress and independence. The nationalists were prolific printers and disseminators of periodicals, propaganda, and petitions which aimed to demonstrate the “public” will of the people. But even as they claimed to be representative of the national whole, they did not produce a transnational political consensus and indeed, represented the earnest ideological views of a comparative small network of intellectuals and middle class educated émigrés. In



many ways, their outsized political significance was conditioned as much by their appearance at an apt geopolitical moment that offered new opportunities to speak for the homeland as by their active construction of a diasporic public sphere.

*“Many diasporas:” Emic versus Etic Readings of Mahjari Identity*

Another complicating factor for the historian working with national identity and political community in the *mahjar* is the tension between emic perspectives on who belonged to the Syrian and Lebanese national communities and etic observations of how transnational activist networks functioned. Most of this dissertation’s central findings—that the *mahjar*’s transnational social institutions created space for emigrant political activism while also conditioning what types of activism (and which movements) prevailed—benefit from the etic perspective that frames this research. This bird’s-eye view allows us to draw comparisons, observe connections, and make build the argument that activists working across the Americas helped construct long-distance “Syrian” and “Lebanese” national identities, and that by extension, the *mahjar* was a part of these emerging national communities. However, these findings are in tension with the emic perspectives of individual activists working within these transnational networks. Though they were engaged in the same expansive, transnational set of social structures, participating in the same activist *habitus*, and undertaking similar (even connected) philanthropic, social, and political projects, none of the activists in this dissertation saw the *mahjar* as a single (or even a plural) “imagined community.” Rather, theirs were a complex amalgam of many identities: each of the emigrants was cast within webs of confessional loyalties, village- or town-based social networks, and networks of kinship, commerce, and alumni. These identities, as well as a shared identity as emigrants, preceded nationalist identities which came later. The emigrants had not left home as Syrians or Lebanese; they belonged to their village, to their family, to their confessional group. Some educated elite emigrants identified as “Ottomans,” with connotations in sync with

the liberal ideas of Ottoman patriotism. During World War I, each layer of identity crashed into the new nationalist signifiers: Syrian, Arab, and Lebanese. In this single *mahjar*, there were simultaneously many “imagined” national communities, each with its own vision of the homeland and its future.

Confessional politics and village-based solidarities both influenced the development of long-distance nationalisms in the *mahjar*. Both appear in places in this dissertation, but neither receives complete analytical attention. Village-based social networks helped determine where the emigrants settled, what kinds of employment they pursued, what sorts of philanthropy they engaged in, and sometimes, whether they returned to the Middle East.<sup>867</sup> Societies bearing the names of towns and cities with significant numbers of successful emigrants (Homs, Zahle, Tripoli, Shwayr, among others) appeared in both North and South America, and emigrants looking to hire Syrian workers relied on these organizations to contract labor from home. An individual’s experience of emigration, resettlement in the Americas, employment, and associational life was thus often encoded within a transnational network defined by connection to a particular town. Continuing patterns of circular migration along these town-based networks helped produce smaller communities of Homsis, Shwayris, and other such groups within the Syrian and Lebanese neighborhoods in the New World, creating diasporas within the diaspora.

Confessional politics also influenced the shape of the *mahjari* communities, and bore more directly upon the politics of nationalism there. Between 1908 and through the 1920s, both the Greek Orthodox Church of Homs and the Maronite Church reach out into the *mahjar*, founding societies among communities of their believers in the Americas and encouraging a transnational political stewardship towards the homeland through philanthropy (in the case of *al-*

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<sup>867</sup> Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity*, 55.

*Nadi al-Homsi*) or through participatory transnational citizenship (which emigrants argued was their right after the census of 1921). During the War, both Orthodox and Maronite clergy in the Mashriq got involved in competing nationalist projects: in Homs, Athanasius ‘Atallah and ‘Isa As‘ad were early supporters of Hashimite Arab nationalism, whereas Maronite Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik came to represent a Franco-Lebanese project for greater Lebanon under French Mandate. Although the *mahjar* was incredibly diverse in terms of sect, comprising Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Druze, Sunni, Shi‘as and Jews, political divisions between Orthodox and Maronite believers (then the two largest groups in these communities) presented one of the sharpest sources of tension during and after the War. This is not to say that the *mahjar*’s nationalist politics was “sectarian,” nor that the allegiances of its activists were determined by their faith: Sallum Mukarzil (a Maronite) was critical of both the Maronite Church and Lebanese nationalism, and Nami Jafet (Orthodox) embraced the French Mandate in Lebanon. That said, many of the political parties in this thesis, while secular in orientation, remained confessionally homogeneous through the early 1920s. Political organizations with a truly cross-confessional membership—*al-Nadi al-Homsi* in Brazil, the (short lived) *Hizb Suriya al-Jadida* in the United States, and the *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-‘Arabiyya* in Argentina—were the exception, not the rule.<sup>868</sup>

#### *What a Transnational Lens Accomplishes, and Its Limitations*

This dissertation had pursued a transnational unit of analysis to escape some of the complications that arise from a diasporic theoretical framework, chief among them the expectation that Syrian and Lebanese emigrants operated in a world apart from the Mashriq.

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<sup>868</sup> Even within these organizations, co-membership of Muslims and Christians was yet rarer. The *Hizb al-Istiqlal li-l-Aqtar al-Arabiyya* in Buenos Aires is the only party in this dissertation with a demonstrably mixed membership with both Christians and Muslims. Its members were predominantly Greek Orthodox, Sunni, and Druze (but importantly, even this party claimed no notable Maronite members).

Emigrant activism, philanthropy, and political culture in the Americas between World War I and the French Mandatory period confirms that emigrants did not only continue to see themselves as part of an ancestral nation (or nations); rather, they also took political action in relationship to the homeland, establishing patterns of collaboration and protest in relation to the nation-states emerging there. Emigrant activists took political action, not as emigrants, but as nationalists and as representatives of the nation from which they were descended. Theirs was a “long-distance” form of nationalism, rather than a diasporic one. The specific patterns of activism, substantive citizenship, and claims-making that make up “long-distance nationalism must,” in the words of Nina Glick Schiller, “be distinguished from other forms of collective longing,” including other diasporic articulations.<sup>869</sup>

Analyzing the development of long-distance nationalist politics and culture within a transnational frame allows this dissertation to pursue the ways that emigrants participated in the politics of their homeland, in collaboration with groups of co-activists at home and on equal footing. Similarly, individuals and groups operating “at home” in Lebanon and Syria participated in the political debates, philanthropic initiatives, and associational life of the *mahjar*, and the degree to which activists, organizations, and even the emerging Mandatory states in the Mashriq engaged with the *mahjar* constitutes a dimension commonly left out of diasporic readings of the Syrian communities in the Americas. From New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires, emigrants participated vigorously in the politics of nationalism, employing the transnational Syrian press, philanthropic organizations, ethnic clubs, and political societies. For emigrant nationalists, the *mahjar* was a place of contest, a place to be represented as part of the national community, a source for material relief, funding, a site for political activism. It was a place with

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<sup>869</sup> Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, 22-3.

a free press, but also a place where propaganda was printed, where troops were levied, and where alliances with foreign powers were brokered. But the *mahjar* was all of these things for nationalists living “at home” in the Mashriq, too. The historians’ distinctions between *mahjar* and Mashriq impose a territorial principle on a set of transnational political movements that actively defied such distinctions and labored against them.

The central irony of this story is that this same transnational body of nationalist activists played a role in the construction of the national boundaries laid down in the Mashriq immediately following the War. Emigrants from competing nationalist camps variously promoted the French Mandate, protested it, or promoted revolutionary action against it. The Mandatory states in Syria in Lebanon, in the meantime, entered into a pattern of selectively embracing and administering the emigrants of the Americas, working through their consular networks as well as through the Maronite Church and certain emigrant elites. Whether supportive of the Mandate or in opposition to it, Syrian and Lebanese emigrant leaders abroad encoded their political appeals within a discourse of transnational citizenship, its rights and responsibilities. The idea that emigrants should work for the good of the nation, refining themselves into the ideal citizen body through social reform, self-improvement, education, and selective borrowings from the American societies they were a part of was the hallmark of Syrian and Lebanese long-distance nationalism through the 1920s. These social reform discourses filtered through a gendered language aimed squarely at Syrian and Lebanese young men and women in the Americas and offering complementary, but unequal, roles in the business of making the nation. For young men, this discourse promoted rigorous self-improvement, transnational philanthropy, and a patriotic masculinity that linked sound bodies and minds to a strong Syrian nation. For emigrant women, and especially young women working in textiles, nationalist debates that

insisted a woman's proper and patriotic place was in the private space of the home (as wives and mother) was an unwelcome shift, coming so swiftly after their contributions to the movement during the War. To "new women" Syrian feminists, the activist politics of periodical press, political committee, and petitioning began to look like an emigrant boy's club; their parallel activism demonstrates that while nationalism was the dominant "long-distance" political trend of the interwar *mahjar*, it was by no means the only one out there.

By relying primarily on "moveable texts:" emigrant serials, club ephemera, petitions, rare books, and personal correspondence, this dissertation has mapped out political networks linking Syrian and Lebanese activists in North and South America while also yielding insight into how these activists engaged foreign powers, particularly the French. My decision to use these fragmentary materials, rather than solely on official documents from state archives, was born of a desire to discern those patterns of transnational political activism and *mahjari* social culture beyond the confines of the French Mandate and its purview. But rather than escaping the Mandate, what resulted was a surprising picture of emigrant activists working with, dealing with, or protesting against the French Mandate as it extended its authority beyond Syria and Lebanon and sought to administer the communities of the *mahjar*. There are many avenues for further inquiry into the *mahjar*'s interwar politics, but paramount among them is the fraught relationship between emigrant nationalists (many of whom had at one point worked for the French) and the Mandate they campaigned for, collided with, and combatted against. Additional research in French diplomatic archives could tease out how this relationship evolved in the 1920s and 1930s.

#### *Major Findings and Summation*

With the caveats of long-distance nationalists' claims to represent the *mahjari* public versus their actual community impact, the continuation of local village-based or confessional styles of politics (and the uneasy relationship these politics had with the nationalist movements),

and the persistent politics of doubt expressed by skeptics both in the *mahjar* as well as in Syria and Lebanon, this dissertation's argument that Syrian and Lebanese long-distance nationalisms influenced Syrian and Lebanese politics and society during and after World War I comes along with several significant corollaries. This research demonstrates that Ottoman Syrians and Lebanese abroad used the transnational Arabophone press to reach the Syrian reading public, and that during the War periodicals produced abroad became the most significant site for a middle-class familial style of nationalism. The tenor of these publications moved from "pro-reform" within an Ottoman constitutional context to stridently nationalist by mid-1916; this is precisely the same moment that Cemal Pasha's tightening censorship policies and subjection of journalists and reformers in Ottoman Syria made *mahjari* papers the principal outlet for opposition. It is shown, furthermore, that as the War progressed, the leadership of the *mahjar*'s nationalist parties increasingly opted for partnership with the Allied Powers, and used the press to publicize the Allied war effort. By 1919, the French Foreign Ministry proved most adept at managing its *mahjari* partners, and Lebanese emigrant leaders (many of them journalists or newspaper editors) played significant roles in the construction of the *Grand Liban* under French Mandate.

The alliance between Lebanese emigrant activists and the French Foreign Ministry bore implications for how emigrants were incorporated into the Lebanese national body, as transnational citizens. This dissertation argues that the three-way partnership between the French Mandate, the Maronite Patriarchate under Patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik, and Lebanese Maronite nationalists operating abroad influenced the Mandate's decision to include Lebanese emigrants in Lebanon's first census, conducted in 1921. By relying on Maronite clergymen to enumerate their number in the Americas, the French Mandate not only guaranteed a confessional ratio seen as favorable for the French at home; the census also empowered the Church with custodianship

over an emerging Lebanese transnational citizenship, while stoking new expectations among Lebanese Maronite registrants living in the Americas. Put simply, the census was conducted as a means of domesticating the Maronite diaspora, but it also opened new questions about emigrants rights in relation to the Lebanese state (especially with regards to suffrage, legal documentation, and the right to travel, all of which the Mandate subsequently struggled to clarify through the 1920s.)

Meanwhile, activists who continued to oppose the Mandate from abroad engaged in specific kinds of long-distance nationalist activism centered on the institutions France built in order to assert authority over emigrants, most notably the Mandate's consular office which emerged in cities with large numbers of emigrant Syrians and Lebanese during the 1920s. By focusing on the development and increasing radicalization of the Arab nationalist movement in Argentina, this dissertation argues that activists like Amin Arslan, Jurj Sawaya, and Jurj 'Assaf saw the Consulate as an important site for opposition to the Mandate system. Debates over the nationality status and travel documentation of Syrian emigrants took a new significance in a *mahjar* where accepting new documents meant implicitly accepting the French Mandatory regime. Arslan and his co-activists described the *mahjar* as a place where Syrians were freer to protest against the government in Syria and advocate revolutionary action against military occupation, ideas which had been more commonplace during World War I but which fell out of favor in the homeland after the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-7. By the late 1920s, the militant Arab nationalism of Arslan and company was increasingly at odds with the collaborationist moderate Syrian nationalism of the National Bloc in Damascus. The Mandate had struggled to domesticate parts of the diaspora, but in Arslan's view, the French had effectively domesticated Syria's nationalist movement by 1930.



Finally, this dissertation's final section illustrates some of the ways that long-distance nationalist ideas influenced political and social culture in the *mahjar*, highlighting how the paternalistic flavor of Syrian and Lebanese nationalisms during this period influenced patterns of philanthropy, sociability, and social reform within the Syrian communities of the Americas. The 1920 establishment of *al-Nadi al-Homsi* in Brazil by emigrant partisans of Emir Faysal's Arab nationalist Syrian state demonstrates how new patterns of patriotic masculinity, themselves of late Ottoman origin, stretched into the diaspora and colored the activities of a new generation of Syrian men and boys living abroad. *al-Nadi al-Homsi* outlived the Hashimite movement that helped produce it, but through the 1920s members of this fraternity found significant ways to reconnect with the homeland through child welfare initiatives, caring for orphans, and participating in a rigorous program of self-improvement through popular education and sport. In the process, "making Syrian men" transformed into a *mahjari* preoccupation, cast in terms of national development, self-determination, and an anticipated liberation of the homeland. Although *al-Nadi al-Homsi* was one of the most visible long-distance nationalist fraternities in the *mahjar*, it was certainly not unique: *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya* similarly transitioned from a revolutionary political committee to a patriotic fraternity during the 1920s, and from Brooklyn this organization commissioned similar measures for the protection of Lebanese children and the preservation of a Francophile Lebanese nationalist culture in the Americas.<sup>870</sup>

Fraternities, masonic lodges, sports clubs, and reading rooms constituted major spaces where young emigrant men plugged into a long-distance nationalist culture that whether Lebanese, Syrian, or Arab, friendly or hostile to the French Mandate, shared a certain middle

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<sup>870</sup> For a detailed discussion of the *Jam 'iyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*'s major accomplishments in the 1920s, see Sallum Mukarzil's chronicle of the society; *al-Kitab al-Lubnani: li-tidhkar yubil al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya al-Fadi, 1911-1936* (New York: *Matba'at al-Huda*, 1936).

class, paternalistic flavor that placed social reform, national development, and the total mobilization of the nation towards these goals at the forefront. The familial rhetoric of these institutions and their codification as men's spaces, however, left Syrian emigrant women outside some of the more "public" roles of nation-making and consigned them to the role of the patriotic mother, a civilizing agent whose principle work was performed in the home. Syrian American women engaged in significant social activism during World War I, work that brought them into new, often tense relationships with male co-activists in the nationalist committees of New York.

The experience of wartime relief generated two ironies that would later spill over. First, despite the patriarchal rhetoric of Syrian and Lebanese long-distance nationalists and the paternalistic practices of the *mahjar*'s textile industry, the wages and labor of emigrant working women constituted one of the most significant sources of the funding raised by the nationalist committees in New York during the war. Women activists sought to press these advantages, exerting themselves more publically and demanding more equal access to the mainstream Syrian press, only to find that the nationalist newspaper editors were hesitant to allow women into this forum. Debates about women's "place" in relation to public political discourse continued into the 1920s, where Syrian American feminists folded them into broader demands for a reassessment of women's political and social roles. In New York City, Syrian "new women" feminists promoted a vision of a modern female citizen who worked outside the home, was well-read and opinionated on the political debates of the day, and whose husband contributed to the household as her equal. Influenced by the American women's movement as well as by the reformist ideas of the men's societies, these emigrant feminists criticized the social culture of the long-distance nationalists as idle, regressive, and unhelpful. The second irony was that within these critiques, the "new women" feminists in the *mahjar* continued to depend on ideas about Syrian

womanhood as a maternal, civilizing agent, ideas borrowed from nationalist visions of the homeland and its relationship to the diaspora.

In the end, activist networks, the continuous circulation of people, printed materials, philanthropic assistance, and political ideas between *mahjar* and Mashriq meant that wherever they were, interwar Syrians and Lebanese lived transnational lives impacted by politics as practiced not only in Beirut or Damascus, but in New York, São Paulo, or Buenos Aires. The collaborations of activists living across the Americas, and the competitions between them, played a significant role in the construction of the French Mandate and in concomitant nationalist movements agitating against it. Understanding the *mahjar* as part of Syria's social geography allows emigrants back into a narrative of nation-building they were once elided from.

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